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Ishavasya Upanishad

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Ishavasya Upanishad



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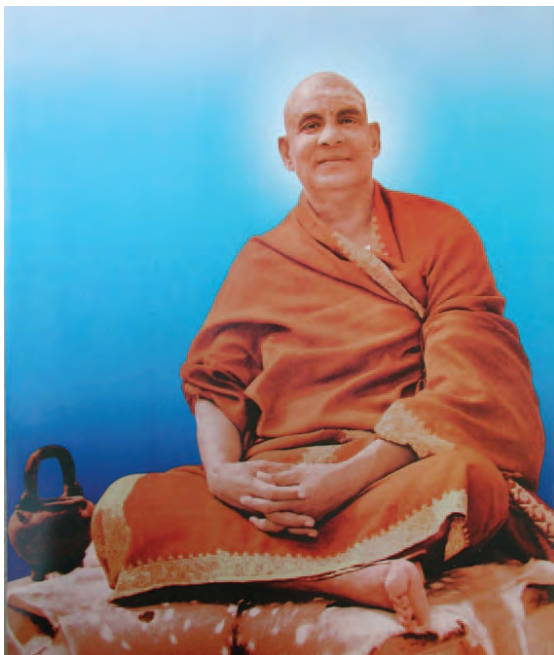
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

Contents

Introduction	1
<i>Rishi Vasishthananda Saraswati</i>	
Shanti Mantra: Peace Invocation	13
1: Isha Pervades All	16
2: Action is Inevitable	23
3: Sunless World of Ignorance	33
4: Omnipresent Self	37
5: Moving yet Unmoving	42
6: Seeing One in All	49
7: Unity of the Self	53
8: Atman is Ever Pure	63
9: Meditation and Karma	66
10: Walking Two Paths	71
11: From Death to Immortality	74
12: Worship of Sakara and Nirakara	78
13: Results of Sakara and Nirakara	83
14: Unmanifest and Manifest	87
15: Golden Lid	90
16: Overwhelming Light	97
17: Transcendence	102
18: Prayer to Agni	106
Shanti Path: Concluding Peace Invocation	109
Appendices	
A: Sanskrit text	115
B: Translation	117

Introduction

The Upanishads are the culmination of the entire body of vedic literature and contain their philosophical essence. Here, the ritualism of the Vedas gives way to a ceaseless search for the truth. The Upanishads do not require the performance of any action as such, instead they reveal the ultimate truth which liberates the seeker at once. These texts are the culmination of the quest for reality. The transition of the Indian mind from the ritualistic details of the Brahmanas to the sublime doctrine of the Upanishads is a dramatic and remarkable event in the sanatana tradition.

The earliest Veda, the *Rig Veda*, describes an external creator which is distinct from one's self, a controller of mundane events to whom one prays for worldly benefits. Speaking of the *Purusha*, the Ultimate Person, it says, "Purusha has a thousand heads . . . thousand eyes . . . He formed those aerial creatures and animals, both wild and tame." In the Upanishads, however, the viewpoint is entirely changed, and the centre of interest is no longer a creator from outside, but that which exists within the Self. This change of position does not carry with it any elaborate philosophical discussions or subtle analysis of the mind. It comes as a matter of direct perception, and the conviction with which the truth is grasped impresses the reader.

Definition

The word ‘upanishad’ is comprised of three words: *upa* + *ni* + *shad*. *Upa* means ‘near’, *ni* ‘attentively’ and *shad* ‘to sit’. Thus, the term Upanishad actually describes the situation in which these unique texts were transmitted. The student or disciple sat near the realized master and listened attentively as he expounded his experiences and understanding of the ultimate reality. Some scholars call the Upanishads ‘secret doctrine’; others call them ‘book of knowledge’. Practically, it means notes taken down by disciples in ancient days, when the guru gave lessons on the supreme knowledge. The lessons were recorded in the minds of the disciples and written down later for posterity.

Since the instructions of a guru were first heard and remembered by the disciples and noted down later, the Upanishads are also known as *shruti*, ‘that knowledge which is heard’. This teaching was said to destroy the ignorance or illusion of the spiritual aspirant regarding what is self and non-self, or real and unreal, in relation to the absolute and relative reality. Adi Shankara, in his introduction to the *Taittiriyaopanishad*, says: “Knowledge of Brahman is called Upanishad, as it loosens the bonds of birth and death and destroys them altogether, and as it leads the seeker very near to Brahman wherein the highest God is seated.”

During the period when the upanishadic texts were propounded, this knowledge of the ultimate reality was considered sacred and was not easily accessible to all. It was imparted on a very selective basis after the mental and spiritual calibre of the seeker had been tested and proven. Each Upanishad reflected the teachings and tradition of a realized master and was connected with a specific Veda and vedic school, or *shakha*. At one time the vedic schools and their respective Upanishads numbered 1,180, but today only 108 are generally known, although about 200 are still extant. These texts contain the direct teachings of great scholars, sages and saints of their time and reflect the heights of their spiritual insight and understanding.

Language

There are ten principal Upanishads, thirty minor ones, and in all 108 popular Upanishads. Some of them are quite old and can be traced back many centuries before the birth of Christ. They are written in a language which was spoken in India during the vedic period. The Sanskrit of the Upanishads is different from the Sanskrit language of today. The rules of grammar are also different. Usually, a present-day student of Sanskrit finds it difficult to read the Upanishads independently. The language used in the Upanishads is known as old or vedic Sanskrit.

Search for knowledge

The seers of the Upanishads and their social and historical background are subjects of great interest. In India, the brahmins safeguarded the religious and theological knowledge of the country. Whatever they preached, sincerely or insincerely, pertained to this lower world, such as rituals and ceremonies for birth, marriage, funerals, and so on. Rituals such as propitiating gods or worshipping nature were taught to the people. The study of the history of the vedic period reveals that there was a time when the masses were very interested in rituals and practised *karma kanda*, or ritualistic religion. In big *yajnas*, fire ceremonies, thousands of people would get together to take *somarasa*, the spiritual drink, and to perform fire worship. In order to conduct the worship, many thousand quintals of food grains, would be offered as oblation to the fire.

The vedic people had their own definition, description and dictionary of knowledge about God. It was a good thing for householders. Although there were few people in society at that time, still they often questioned: "Is what the priests preach about God and the temples all true?" Since people had their own liabilities and responsibilities to their families, they could not find the time to search for a true answer to their enquiries. Some of them then decided to renounce their responsibilities and retire into the forest in seclusion

for contemplation and meditation, to find out the truth. “Is there a God sitting somewhere?” “Or are there many gods responsible for different departments of the world?” “Are they like angels or ghosts?” “Does God come or send somebody as His representative?” Religious beliefs were questioned and people wanted to know the truth. Therefore, after fulfilling the obligations of family life, they retired into seclusion, either with their spouse or alone.

Brahmavidya gurus

Those who went into seclusion were not sannyasins in the strict sense of the word. They led simple and austere lives in a hermitage, and contemplated on the nature of the universe and their inner self. They aspired to know the fundamentals of nature and the mysteries of life, death, birth and rebirth. Some of them received the answers and they were known as *rishis*, or seers, since they ‘saw’. The rishis then imparted this true knowledge to those who were following the religion of the temples blindly. They believed that at least a few among them would be helped and lifted up from stagnant beliefs. A band of disciples was formed who were trained in the new way of thought. When these disciples realized the truth, they were sent far and wide. In this way, the *guru parampara*, the tradition of gurus or teachers, came into existence. The enlightened teachers came to be known as *Brahmavidya* gurus, as they imparted the highest knowledge.

Unlike ordinary priests, the gurus did not conduct worship, prayers or sermons in a temple. They possessed knowledge and communicated it to their disciples, and the disciples in turn communicated it to their own disciples. The whole truth was communicated in this manner. Then, from time to time, new successors of the tradition came up. However, the ultimate truth for which the great men had renounced was not simple to realize. It was a truth of the unknown, which will ever remain unknown. Perhaps they obtained only a glimpse of that true knowledge, and this fact is accepted and admitted in all the Upanishads. The

Upanishads do not claim or suggest that they have told the whole truth.

Reflecting this, the Upanishads often use the word *neti*, which means 'this is not the end'. Suppose you want to describe a person, but are unable to express everything about him. You may say, "This is not everything about him." In Sanskrit, the root *na* means 'not' and *iti* means 'the end'. It means that the Upanishads admit that whatever they have spoken about the truth is not the ultimate 'end all'. The entire universe and God, or the supreme truth, is not only this much. Throughout the world there was never a set of frank and true thinkers like the ancient rishis, who dedicated their lives to the search and research of the truth, and ultimately declared its forms. Their final statement is: "Not only this; not only this."

Origin of Brahmaavidya

In the tradition of Brahmaavidya gurus, many rishis and great men followed. From time to time they added their own fund of knowledge to what already existed. A collection of what they said to their close disciples is called the Upanishads. Who were these gurus? The *kshatriyas*, the warrior class, led this movement of truth in India. They questioned the authority of the brahminical statements on gods, demi-gods and natural gods, although they did not object to worship. The *kshatriyas* were great kings and warriors, and thought it proper to seek true knowledge. They renounced their homes and went into the forest to find out the truth. The Upanishads make us believe that some of these *kshatriyas* became great rishis.

When the brahmins came to know that a particular science of truth was being preached by such rishis, they could not understand it. At that time the people were practising only karma kanda. They were given to believe that if they performed good actions in this world, they would be rewarded in heaven by certain gods. The brahmins could not understand the truth that 'there is one essence and that is all-pervading'. They believed that God sits somewhere, and from there He controls the movements of the stars, sun and moon. When the truth of

the Supreme, the ultimate, the final, the conclusive, the all-pervading, One essence was propagated, the brahmins could not understand it, as it was a new concept for them.

Then the great brahmin priests began going to the kshatriya rishis in search of knowledge. One such brahmin named Yajnavalkya went to Ajatshatru, the king of Varanasi, and many others went to King Janaka, a kshatriya emperor, to gain knowledge of the true being. Finally, Brahmanvidya was given to all. Many brahmins later thought that this might mislead the masses, so the truth was not expounded by them. They believed that all the Upanishads should be first properly compiled, and imparted only to a disciple by his guru by word of mouth.

Wisdom of the Upanishads

The disciples first memorized the Upanishads before receiving permission to write them down. Each and every word was learned by heart with closed eyes in a traditional way. It was considered desirable to maintain this tradition, so that even if the books were lost or destroyed at any time, they could be rewritten. All sannyasins should know all the Upanishads by heart. The Upanishads do not contain sectarian knowledge. They are never considered as knowledge or wisdom of the Hindus. They comprise the wisdom that the seers developed in the geographical area of this country. This knowledge has nothing to do with any sect, and has very little to do with any god. It always talks about the true essence of the universe, which pervades all sentient and insentient beings. Thus, the Upanishads should be regarded as the fountainhead of supreme knowledge.

Opinions expressed on the Upanishads by some of the great scholars are noteworthy. The well-known philosopher Schopenhauer said that the Upanishads were a solace in his life, and even after death they would continue to be a solace to his soul. In the same manner, Max Muller, the German Indologist, wrote the following in his introduction to *The Sacred Books of the East*: “If there could be any collection of

the permanent, unchanging, unchallengeable thoughts of the Supreme Being, free from any tinge of sectarianism and communalism, it was the Upanishads.” Research has been done on the Upanishads, and they have been translated into all major languages. The Upanishads have received attention from many European scholars and authors, who presented the translation to their countrymen. The Upanishads find a special place in the higher faculties of the department of philosophy in nearly all universities.

Major Upanishads

The Upanishads have been composed in different periods of time, the earlier ones having a more archaic language and sometimes being written in prose. The later Upanishads have been invariably written in metre form. The earliest ones are supposed to have been written around 500 BC. They are: *Ishavasya*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Prashna*, *Mundaka*, *Mandukya*, *Taittiriya*, *Aitareya*, *Chhandogya* and *Brihadaranyaka*. These ten are known as the major Upanishads. They are rich in profound philosophical thought and give vivid descriptions of the nature of the *Atman*, the supreme, individual soul, in a variety of ways, and expound suitable methods and aids to attain the immortal Brahman, the absolute, universal consciousness.

Ishavasya Upanishad

The *Ishavasya Upanishad* is a small text of eighteen verses, which comprises the last chapter of the *Yajur Veda*. The entire *Yajur Veda* is divided into forty chapters. The first thirty-nine chapters talk about the mantras in connection with rituals, ceremonies, worship, poems, incantations, hymns, and so on, and the last chapter talks of nothing but the supreme knowledge. Thus, this Upanishad is considered to be the seed of the entire Indian philosophy, as well as the vedantic philosophy. The philosophy of *Parabrahman*, the Supreme Being, and *Brahmavidya*, the cosmic knowledge, developed from this Upanishad. Hence, it is also known as the Vedanta Upanishad, but *Ishavasya* is its most popular name.

This Upanishad has been named after the initial word in the first line of the first mantra: *Ishavasyamidam sarvam* – “This whole world is pervaded by the Lord.” Meditation on this one idea alone will lead the seeker to the attainment of the knowledge of the Self. By contemplation on the significance of this line, the aspirant will become a seer of Oneness. He will have a direct vision of the Absolute and the state of inner illumination. Although the concepts found within this Upanishad are apparently simple and intelligible, in reality, it is one of the most difficult to understand properly. The aspirant should therefore study these verses with a one-pointed and pure mind, under the guidance of an experienced teacher. Then all the knowledge contained within them will become clear.

The text contains reflections on various topics, the central theme being the attempt to affect a compromise between the older ritualism and the newer metaphysics. The Upanishad has not yet lost its moorings in vedic mythology and we find reminiscences in it of vedic deities, such as Matarishvan, Yama, Surya, Prajapati and Agni. The Upanishad seems to have been written at a time when a transition was taking place from the old vedic legendary hymns to the new upanishadic philosophical verses. The reference to the ‘previous seers’ in this Upanishad presupposes a long line of antecedent thinkers, each philosophizing in his own way, the cumulative result of their reflections being transmitted down to the times of the *Ishavasya Upanishad*.

This Upanishad takes us to a discussion of the Self, regarded as bright, incorporeal, whole, pure and uncontaminated by evil. He is the seer, omnipresent and self-existent. It is due to this Self that things have been disposed of rightly for eternity (v. 8). A little after this, we are told that even though this bright luminous Self exists as the eternal background of all things, fulfilling all the conditions of the highest reality, still His face is hidden by a golden disc, which comes like a cloud between the Sun and the observer. Finally, the author insists upon the identity of the Self in man, and the Self in the sun (v. 16).

The mysticism of the Upanishad as a whole is contained in a peculiar description of the Self, which goes beyond a mere metaphysical treatment. The mystical description of the Atman in this Upanishad tells us that it does not move, yet is even faster than the mind; that none of the senses are able to reach it; that even though stationary, it moves beyond anything that has any motion. In this way, an attempt is made to reconcile contradictions in a mystical description of the Atman. "The Self moves and yet does not move. It is both far and near. It is internal to everything and at the same time it is external to everything that exists." (v. 5)

One of the main features of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* is the ethical advice that it offers, and the ethics of this Upanishad are definitely based upon the metaphysical position advanced in it. The very opening words of this Upanishad tell us that God pervades everything. As a corollary from this metaphysical position, the ethical advice it offers is that a man ought to enjoy whatever God bestows on him in the firm belief that, as He pervades everything, whatever God bestows on him must be good. It follows naturally that the Upanishad should forbid us from coveting another man's property or from doing harm to another.

Another ethical advice, and one which assumes great importance in the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*, is that man must spend his lifetime always in action, specifically the karmas enjoined in the scriptures, in a mood of resignation to His will. Inactivity, according to this Upanishad, would be the canker of the soul.

Finally, the text goes on to say that one who sees all beings in the Self, and sees the Self as existing in all beings, for whom all beings and everything that exists have become the Self, cannot turn away from anything in disgust. How can such a one suffer infatuation? What ground would such a one have for grief? Aversion, infatuation and grief proceed from an inability to see the Atman in all things. However, one who realizes the oneness of all things, for whom everything has

become the Self, ceases to be affected by the common foibles and suffering of humanity.

Imparting the wisdom

It is one of the roles of the guru to interpret the eternal truths of spiritual life in a way that is relevant to the lifestyle of the era of humanity in which they live. Hence, Swami Sivananda interpreted such truths at a philosophical level during a period when Indian thought was introduced to the West mainly in the form of philosophies such as Advaita Vedanta and Samkhya. In his time, even yoga was studied more as a philosophy than a practice.

Swami Satyananda, however, at first taught in a period when people in the West had tired of mere philosophical discussions and were seeking more practical instructions on the spiritual path. Therefore, although he also taught the eternal truths in their philosophical form, he made them concrete by introducing countless practical means, via numerous forms of yoga, for a safe and steady evolution of consciousness. This steady evolution was suitable for both the renunciate and those living and working in the modern world of the period in which he developed Satyananda Yoga-Bihar Yoga. He then established organizations in which those practising his methods could live in an ashram environment for any length of time. This environment was conducive to imbibing the skills and methods of higher forms of yoga by learning to live and experience a yogic lifestyle. He set a supreme example of both yogic sadhana and personal social behaviour towards all, and especially the underprivileged in society. Thus, he created extensive and highly successful means for the materially underprivileged as well as the spiritual growth and wellbeing of all without exception.

Swami Niranjanananda, following in the footsteps of his guru Swami Satyananda, has extended the range of practicability and effectiveness of the teachings of Swami Satyananda to encompass the needs of various social sectors. Furthermore, he has provided ever-increasing means and

amenities for ordinary people in the community, both from India and abroad, to participate in the many intense spiritual activities involving yoga, ashram life, and ritual activities taking place at Ganga Darshan, the home of Satyananda Yoga. In this historical period of yoga's widespread popularity, there have arisen many misconceptions about yoga, and many of the higher practices and goals are practically unknown to practitioners studying in the popular yoga schools and centres. Swami Niranjanananda is constantly enhancing people's understanding of yoga by tirelessly explaining the deeper meanings in his clear and extensive satsangs, lecture series and publications. This concern to extend the effectiveness of yoga and the yogic lifestyle to more and more people living and working in all strata and professions of modern society is evident in the style of his commentary on the *Ishavasya Upanishad*.

In this commentary, Swami Niranjanananda elaborates further the philosophical concepts of the Upanishads. Hence, although he is concerned with explaining the ideas to those involved in worldly life, he still maintains a high philosophical level, and relates the concepts to the notions held in Samkhya, Charvaka and other philosophies. At the same time, he uses numerous instances within the experiences of ordinary people engaged in the activities of day-to-day life to make the philosophical concepts accessible to all. To further aid the reader's comprehension, he includes illustrative passages and stories from other classical texts. The commentary also contains elaborate comparisons of the presuppositions of modern psychology, gleaned from his extensive interaction with spiritual seekers through his role as spiritual head of the Satyananda Yoga Tradition of yoga. His commentary is extensive and detailed, and even the final two mantras, usually treated in a rather cursory manner, are given interesting and involved interpretations.

—*Rishi Vasishtananda Saraswati*

Shanti Mantra: Peace Invocation

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

*Om Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaat Poornamudachyate,
Poornasya Poornamaadaaya Poornamevaavashishyate.
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih*

Anvay

Adah: That (Brahman, the creator); *Poornam*: is full, infinite;
Idam: this (universe, the created); *Poornam*: is full, infinite;
Poornaat: from that full, infinite; *Poornam*: this full, infinite;
Udachyate: emanates; *Poornasya*: of the full, infinite; *Poornam*:
(if) the full, infinite; *Aadaaya*: is taken out; *Poornam*: the full,
infinite; *Eva*: only (yet, still); *Avashishyate*: remains.

Translation

That (Brahman, the creator) is full, this (universe, the created) is full. From the full emanates the full. On taking the full out of the full, the full still remains.

Commentary

In the Vedas, there are ten Shanti Mantras, mystic verses of peace. They are expressions inspired by the desire to dedicate oneself to Paramatman, the Supreme Universal Spirit, by cultivating absolute faith in its existence. The Shanti Path is a resolve. There is an essential difference between a prayer and a resolve. Prayers are intended for specific gains. A resolve, however, is merely an expression of determination. Most religious texts express a desire for something or the other from the Almighty. In contrast, nothing is desired in the ten Shanti Mantras of the Vedas, except wishing well for all alike, without any conditions.

This Shanti Mantra has been taken from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, and is the *beeja mantra* or the seed mantra expressing the essence of the Vedanta philosophy. This mantra is the complete and perfect explanation of the entire Indian philosophy. All streams of Indian philosophy, Vedanta, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, and so on, attempt to offer explanations about the *poorna*, the full, the infinite, that this mantra refers to. Behind the manifest world is a force called Brahman, which, as an entity, is poorna. It is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Creation has emanated from that supreme force. The fullness of this supreme force upon creation has, however, remained as before creation. It continues to remain poorna, even after the poorna (the infinite universe) has been taken out of the poorna (Infinite Brahman, the creator), as this is the very nature of poorna.

In Indian philosophy, the word ‘poorna’ signifies that which is not *apoorna*, incomplete, that which remains unaffected by the circumstances of time and place. It is endless and untouched by disease and sorrow. It is with form, without form, and also with endless forms. It remains true in the three times of past, present and future. Poorna is infinite, supreme consciousness. In explaining the word ‘poorna’, Shankaracharya has said, “Poorna is the Truth, only the Truth and nothing but the Truth.” This poorna is invisible and beyond the perception of the sense organs. Therefore, it is only experienced in the states of dhyana and samadhi.

Let us take a look at creation. We may ask, “Is creation composed of God or pervaded by God?” A similar question would be, “Is the ocean composed of water or pervaded by water?” If we say that the ocean is composed of water, it is the ocean which receives prominence. Alternatively, if we say that the ocean is pervaded by water, water receives prominence. If we say that creation is composed of God, it implies that God and creation are two different things. If we say that God pervades creation, it implies that God and creation are one and the same.

Take the example of an earthen pot. When a lump of mud receives a form and a name, it becomes a pot. If we take the name and form away from it, only the basic element of mud remains. In the same manner, if we remove the name and form from creation, what remains is Brahman. Manifest creation is visible to us, but is only a small fraction of the energy of Brahman. In the *Mahabharata* it is said: *Harih eva jagat, jagat eva harih* – “There is no difference between creation and God.” The unmanifest power, Brahman, and that which emanates from it, namely the visible creation, are both poorna.

The omnipresent, supreme consciousness, Brahman, pervades everything. A minute fraction of its energy takes the form of matter. Even modern science recognizes that there is no intrinsic difference between matter and energy. Visible, manifest creation is but an expression of the poorna. Different samples of seawater taken from different places will all taste salty. This is because the basic element of the sea is the same everywhere. In the same way, when the supreme power, Brahman, manifests itself, it does not change its basic quality.

If we hold that creation is not a manifestation of God himself, but that he made it separately, the question would be, “From where did God get all the matter for creation? Did he take a loan from somewhere?” It is from this point that the dualistic views originate. The truth remains, however, that the entire creation is a manifestation and expression of God, the supreme power, Brahman. When two truths meet, they unite to form one truth and not two. Similarly if two poornas (infinities) on uniting create two poornas, they cannot by definition be poorna. If we add something to or subtract something from infinity, it still remains infinity. It is for this reason that Brahman is termed poorna in Indian philosophy.

Mantra 1: Isha Pervades All

ॐ ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥ १॥

*Om ishaarvaasyamidam sarvam yatkincha jagatyaam jagat;
Tena tyaktena bhunjeethaa maa gridhah kasyasvid dhanam.*

Anvay

Jagatyaam: in this entire universe; *Yat kim cha*: whatever; *Jagat*: which is ever-changing; *Idam sarvam*: all that (is regarded as); *Isha*: of the Lord; *Vaasyam*: the abode, the dwelling place; *Tena*: by Him (the Lord); *Tyaktena*: (whatever is) given; *Bhunjeethaah*: (you) enjoy; *Maa gridhah*: do not covet; *Kasyasvit dhanam*: (for) whose indeed is wealth?

Translation

All that exists in this ever-changing universe is the abode of the Lord (in which the Lord resides). Enjoy whatever the Lord gives you. Do not covet, for whose indeed is wealth?

Commentary

God pervades the entire universe, therefore one should enjoy the world with detachment and a constant awareness of His existence. One should not covet the objects of enjoyment belonging to others.

In this mantra, it has been postulated that there is one ruler of the entire world. Although the word 'Isha' has been used here for God, it has its origin in the root verb *ish*, which means 'to rule'. It is this idea of ruling over, of governance, which has been expressed in the word 'Ishwara'. To rule is to implement a certain order. In the entire universe, there is a power constantly at work which possesses an incomparable capacity to govern the elements of creation. That supreme power systematically governs all the functions of the universe in accordance with certain rules. All the activities of the

universe, whether in the realm of the physical, mental or spiritual, whether related to birth or death, are dependent on and subservient to his rule.

The question that arises now is: how can this power be conceived? Every religion of the world has endeavoured to visualize this power in its own way. Some have accepted or personified this power in the form of a king or a powerful person. The Vedas accept its existence not in the form of a person, but in the form of energy. Conceptualizations of this kind, though not erroneous, are critically dependent on the extent of evolution of the philosopher's mind. *Syadvada* is an assertion of probability in Jain philosophy that developed from the consideration of multiple possibilities. Rather than saying, "It is", it says, "It may be this, but it may also be that." Truth viewed from one angle will only be one angle of the truth. The person who knows any relative truth will also have to admit that he does not have the complete knowledge of it. The truth is conceivable, but is not perceptible. It can be known, but is not already known.

The next question that arises is: who rules this world after all, and where does He reside? Every atom of creation is pervaded by the ruling power of governing consciousness. It does not station itself at one particular place to govern. Rather, it rules over the universe by pervading it uniformly. Although worshippers establish and proclaim an image of their God according to the bounds of their intellect, when truth is unveiled, it is simply an experience of each and every atom of creation being pervaded by God, whether animate or inanimate. The manifest world is not removed from the power of consciousness, which is both its efficient as well as material cause. Creation is the expression of this power, and is itself the root element. If that root element were taken out of creation, absolutely nothing would remain.

The same element manifests itself in many visible forms. This happens on account of another cause, called *Maya* in

the Upanishads and Prakriti in Samkhya philosophy. This Maya or Prakriti is the energy of Brahman, the Supreme Consciousness, and is as inseparable from Brahman as heat is from fire and fluidity from water. This power of manifestation existing within Brahman is Maya. It is through Maya that Brahman acquires many forms, thereby making the Supreme Consciousness visible to us in the form of the world. That God resides in the dwelling places we make for Him is not the only truth, and is not the untruth either. By being omnipresent He is there, and also everywhere else. Emotional preferences may inspire us to worship Him in one place over another; however, the fact remains that the entire universe is radiant due to the very same Brahman that exists everywhere.

There are two types of truth in the world: one exists in the form of the basic element, and the other is visible to us in its manifest form while being supported by a constant and steady flow of consciousness. The literal meaning of the word *jagat* is *yat gacchati tat jagat*, which means, “Jagat is that which undergoes constant change.” However Brahman, the omnipresent and basic consciousness, is equable and steady. The consciousness of the individual living being, which is always striving for evolution, is also the same Brahman. Only the name and form, the combination of which is known as Maya, are changing. *Maya*, the combination of name and form, is the cause of the phenomenal world. Brahman manifests through this name and form.

When the yogi introverts his outward flowing consciousness through *dhyana*, meditation, there occurs a separation of Maya and Brahman. This is the state of *satya*, truth. In this state, the consciousness, or *chetana*, is perceived and studied while being immersed in it. Even though the ever-changing objects of the world may appear false like a shadow, they also have truth as their base. The shadow may be false, but not its cause. Even illusion is based on truth. All true devotees have experienced the world as the expression of *satchidananda*, truth, consciousness and bliss, but one

devoid of *jnana*, knowledge, will find the world vacuous, meaningless and devoid of any base.

The Supreme Consciousness pervades the *jiva*, the individual, and *jagat*, the ever-changing world, in the same way as saltiness pervades salt. Such a presence is invisible; it is a hidden and intangible phenomenon. It has to be unfolded, as fire released from wood. When it is discovered that the entire world is indeed permeated by a single uniform entity, a Supreme Governance, unity is experienced. The sadhaka has the experience of *atmashakti*, the shakti or power of his consciousness or Atma. It is from this point that renunciation or *tyaga* begins. Renunciation is not meant for others; it is for one's own self. Generally, people consider only the enjoyment of sensory objects as bhoga, but this is not true. Bhoga is the natural dharma or function and attribute of the sensory organs. Eating, sleeping, seeing, and so on, are all bhoga. Everyone who takes birth is automatically subject to the use of the sensory organs. This is a natural propensity of sensory organs.

Bhoga or enjoyment is of two kinds. One is with *raga* or desire, known as sakama or ragapoorna bhoga. The other is with *vairagya* or detachment, known as nishkama or viragpoorna bhoga. *Sakama bhoga* is that which serves the personal requirements of an individual, whereas *nishkama bhoga* is that which serves the needs of others. In *ragapoorna bhoga*, enjoyment full of and stemming from desire, the person endeavours to bring all worldly things under his exclusive control. This kind of bhoga is the cause of suffering. On the contrary, the person who has experienced the omnipresence of the Atma in all of creation spontaneously opts for *viragpoorna bhoga*, enjoyment while remaining detached. After one is established in renunciation, the sensory organs, even though performing their natural functions, do not produce any adverse reaction.

Enjoyment with renunciation, and desire with *yoga*, or union of the Self and Brahman, is a truly wonderful and unique combination. To be able to perceive yourself as

one with the entire creation while holding the disciplined attitude of renunciation, without suppressing the natural functions of the sensory organs, is the yoga of desirelessness, *nishkama yoga*. For the practitioner or sadhaka it is essential that he should not have the tendency to covet. When he begins to perceive the extension of his Atma in all matter, his greed, attachment and covetousness die a natural death. Covetousness and greed should not be considered a defect of conduct and character; it is only a mental defect. If we consider it a grievous defect of character, it will only tend to increase in intensity. Diseases are not only physical, they are also mental; desire, lust, greed, envy, anger, etc. are mental diseases.

The problem is that our approach to the understanding of life and its principles has become erroneous. Mental diseases give rise to distorted perceptions. For the attainment of *antardrishti*, the inner vision of oneself, it is imperative to be rid of greed, attachment and covetousness. There are two types of visions, *antaranga*, internal, and *bahiranga*, external. The *antaranga* or internal vision is that which experiences the Atma. The *bahiranga* or external vision is that which experiences the sensory objects. If the vision that is completely absorbed in sensory objects, is not withdrawn from them, the mind falls prey to mental imbalance.

When desire becomes imbalanced and a particular object of desire obsesses the mind, it leads to a mental defect; this is *lobha*, covetousness. The desire for wealth is not in itself *lobha*. The desire for a son is not *mamata* or affection, in itself. The desire for a woman is not *kama* or lust, in itself. Scolding one's children at home with harsh words to prevent them from making mistakes is not *krodha* or anger. However, if these become obsessive and compulsive to the extent that one becomes a slave to them, then these states are known as lust, anger and covetousness; *kama*, *krodha* and *lobha*. These states cause neuroses, and when they are acute they can lead to such deep neurosis, that the affected person may end up being completely ineffective in the world.

The objects that we run after so madly are but our own shadow. Wealth belongs to no one; it is only a means of comfort. Since wealth is hard-earned, it will be spent on enjoyment. When people consider wealth as a goal in itself, their minds become the victims of illusion, and they are led to fickleness and distraction. This results in a neurotic state of mind. With such a mind, it is impossible to experience the all-expansive Atman. This is the experienced voice of the Upanishads, which has been realized in the higher states of consciousness.

This mantra of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* advocates equal importance in dealing with *shreyas*, the virtuous acts, and *preyas*, the desired acts. Preyas, if pursued like a sadhana with clarity and discipline, will lead to shreyas. Preyas provides comfort and shreyas provides *ananda* or bliss and auspiciousness. If the pleasurable is considered more important than the desirable, then shreyas will have to be forgotten. When one forgets shreyas and remembers only preyas, one traps oneself in mental agitation. In addition to shreyas and preyas, there is another doctrine, called *Shreyas Pantha*, which advocates a combination of both pursuits. According to this, life and the meaning of life; *sadhana*, the effort made towards spiritual attainment; *sadhya*, the spiritual attainment itself, and *iti*, the end, are all shreyas, all that is desirable and worthy of accomplishment. This is the path of saints of very high standing who achieve total vairagya by walking on this path.

Now, we have three paths before us: preyas, shreyas and a combination of both. In the *Bhagavad Gita* too, there is a mention of similar paths. The path of *pravrittimaya nivritti* is the path of freedom from attachment while performing the normal activities of the world, and the path of *nivrittimaya pravritti*, the path of renunciation while performing the activities of the world. The *Bhagavad Gita* also prescribes *akarma*, actions performed without the attitude of doership and identification, as the desirable attitude.

We desire *sukha*, comfort, and *ananda*, bliss, together. However, our sense organs have a limitation in their capacity for enjoyment. There is also a limit to the mental capacity for sustaining the thoughts and experiences of sensory pleasure. When overindulgence engulfs all facets of life, it signals the beginning of suffering. This is the principle of life. This is why the shrutis, the Vedas and sacred texts advise a balanced approach to enjoyment in life. The way to enjoy *sukha* or comfort is through the attainment of *anasakti*, non-attachment to sensory objects. The way to enjoy *ananda* or bliss is through the attainment of *atmanubhuti*, the realization of the Atman in all.

Mantra 2: Action is Inevitable

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतुं समाः ।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥ 2॥

*Kurvanneveha karmaani jijevishechchhatam samaah;
Evam tvayi naanyathetosti na karma lipyate nare.*

Anvay

Iha: in this world; *Kurvan*: by discharging; *Karmaani*: (one's) duties; *Jijevishet*: one should desire to live life with zeal; *Shatam samaah*: for a hundred years; *Evam*: by doing this; *Karma*: actions (performed); *Na lipyate*: do not cling; *Tvayi nare*: to you, Oh man; *Na asti*: there is none; *Itah anyathaa*: other way than this.

Translation

One should desire to live life with zeal for a hundred years by engaging in the discharge of one's duties. Actions performed as indicated in this verse do not cling to you, Oh man. This is the way and there is none other than this.

Commentary

In a nutshell, this mantra says that an individual must aspire to live for a hundred years while discharging his karmas. Karmas done with this attitude do not create a negative effect. Moreover, there is no other way to live. This mantra is one of optimism and guards against any misunderstanding that may have been created by the principle expounded in the previous mantra. This mantra ensures that people do not misinterpret the message of *vairagya*, the renunciation of attachment and covetousness, given in the previous mantra to be the renunciation of action. This is why the importance of karmas has been duly emphasized in this mantra.

The word 'karma' has been used in the plural here. This does not signify good and bad karmas. Generally, karmas are

of three kinds: *nitya karma*, which includes our daily activities that do not need any new learning or inputs, such as eating, sleeping, washing, and so on. The second type is *naimittika karma*, which includes the periodical rites that every person goes through in their life. This includes auspicious ceremonies, like the *upanayana samskara*, the wearing of the sacred thread, *vivaha*, marriage, and others. The third is *kamyā karma*, work done to attain a specific aim, like a job or a business. It is for these three types of karmas that the word ‘karma’ has been used in the plural form.

The meaning of the word *karma* in the context of this mantra is ‘duty’. Those people who are involved in worldly activities and surrounded by various wishes, desires and ambitions cannot attain *sukha* or comfort by isolating themselves from karma. For them, there is no other desirable and effective path other than that of karma. *Nivritti marga*, or the path of detachment and isolation from the world and karma, will not lead them to any kind of success. One who seeks to renounce the world while still under the debt of unfinished karmas and samskaras is like a man who seeks health by cleansing externally while his body remains full of toxins within. One should never abandon the performance of karmas unless the impressions on the mind accumulated through lifetimes in the form of karmas and samskaras have been worked out. For this purpose, and for these people, there is the *pravritti marga*, the path of action and life in worldly society.

In the eighth chapter of the *Yajur Veda*, there is a mantra: *Nanyah pantha vidyate ayanaya* – “One exits the room through the same door that one enters.” Similarly, the destruction of acquired karma, impressions, takes place through the same route of karma, actions, by which it was acquired. The elimination of *prarabdha*, the residual impressions of past actions, is possible only by positive karma and *purushartha*, work done as duty. Whatever may be the importance of the worldly or external dimension of karma, its spiritual side is very important. All the sects that

advocated the renunciation of karma could not survive. Their prescription for emancipation was erroneous and therefore ineffective.

Those burdened with karmas and samskaras have only one way out, the way of karma, the way of action. The path of renunciation, *nivritti marga*, is appropriate only for those who have acquired freedom from such bondage. *Nivritti* is the fast and unobstructed path, like the flight of birds, whereas *pravritti* is the path of ants, slow and steady. Everything in this world, whether animate or inanimate, sentient or insentient, is destined to reach the goal of evolution one day. All will eventually be emancipated. The difference lies only in the time taken. Those with a slow speed will reach a little later than those with a fast speed.

On the *nivritti* path of *sadhana* and renunciation one can reach faster, but this is not appropriate for all. How can the direct path of a bird's flight be pursued by a person with a fickle, unsteady mind, full of desires and distractions, and the shortcomings of an unfit body? It will result in nothing but pain, for one has to forego all the infatuations and conveniences of life. One has to leave aside all the objects and associations to the attachments of several lifetimes. One has to surrender all feelings, thoughts, opinions and preferences. One has to completely annihilate the old personality. How difficult is this path of renunciation!

However, on the path of *pravritti*, the worldly life with attachment to the business and pleasures of the world, one can proceed with all one's weaknesses and strengths, with all one's good and bad qualities. What is required is their proper orientation. That path, which the scriptures name *pravritti marga*, the Vedas have named the *karma marga*, the path of action. Similarly, what is known as the path of *nivritti* by the ancient scriptures is named *sannyasa marga*. The path of *sannyasa* is an excellent path and has also been praised in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* describes these two paths as the path of shade and the

path of sunlight. It is not appropriate for everyone to go through the path of sunlight (nivritti marga). Similarly, if the invincible renunciate is put on the path of pravritti, he will feel suffocated.

It is peculiar that people in the world are eager to know about hatha yoga, jnana yoga, bhakti yoga and raja yoga, but not about karma yoga. Mysterious are the ways of karma. Karma refers not only to work; rather, it is the governing truth of creation. It is like wealth, which is earned and cherished over successive lives. When we do something, it does not end when we finish doing it. It leaves a definite impression on the mind and life, and that impression is known as *samskara*. Thereafter, those impressions are reborn again. Even though we may be a mere spectator of an incident, its effect on our life is inevitable, be it today or ten years later.

Although the innocent mind of the child does not understand the actions of his parents, to which he is a mere spectator, they are etched on his mental screen for posterity. The earlier in childhood the impression is made, the later it will manifest in the individual's life. If an impression of a certain activity of the parents is made on the child at the age of two or three, it will manifest in him when he is thirty to thirty five years old. Even casual scenes observed with a cursory glance while walking or driving create a *samskara* on the subtle mind, although the impression is unconscious and without any ulterior motive.

In comparison, if a person observes a scene with greed and vested interest, the impression created will be that much more intense and will manifest quickly. If a situation is viewed with indifference, the effect of the *samskara* will be much less and will appear relatively later. When the *samskaras* are stored, they take the form of *vasana*, seed impressions that bring happiness, pain, friendship, enmity, jealousy and desire in life. Whatever be the direct, external factors to which we may attribute our fears and worries, they have an indirect, internal cause also.

All of our actions, whether good or bad, mild or intense, gather together. The subtle body does not have separate rooms. Generally, people who desire deliverance from karma talk of abandoning karma itself. A similar incident has been described in the *Yoga Vasishtha* in which the ideology of the Indian philosophy has been fully highlighted. There is no connection between vairagya and the renunciation of one's daily activities, *nitya karma*. He who is a *virakta*, one free from worldly attachment, does not need to renounce karma. Karmas are imposed on us by the human body, society, nature and by the samskaras themselves. Karma must be done, and it is possible to be free from its bondage, even while doing it.

Karmas performed with an attitude of service, worship and compassion, along with a constant remembrance that *Ishavasyam idam sarvam* – “God pervades everything”, whether auspicious or inauspicious, cannot bind us. When performed in this way, it becomes immaterial whether the karmas are done with a desire for results or are free from the desire for results. What matters is that our desires do not obsess and overpower the mind. If they do, they will become the cause of bondage. When desire becomes an obsession, it leads to bondage.

The mantra not only stresses the importance of karma, but also gives inspiration for living a hundred years. This is optimism. When an optimist visualizes his future, he always sees light. Even in the darkness of life he sees the emerging ray of hope. In order to be able to view life from the angle of optimism, it is necessary to love life and karma both. Only then does life take on a golden hue. A desire has been expressed in the Vedas not only to live for a hundred years, but also to live in good health throughout the hundred years and even beyond. This is evident from the mantra in the *Yajur Veda* (36:24):

Tatchakshurdevahitam purastat shukramuccharat.
Pashyema sharadah shatam, jivema sharadah shatam,

*Shrinuyama sharadah shatam, prabavama sharadah shatam,
Aditah syama sharadah shatam, bhuyashcha sharadah shatam.*

O Lord! By acquiring energy from the Sun, rising in the East,
Which has been made brilliant by your grace,
May we see, live, hear, speak and remain free from poverty
For a hundred autumnal seasons, and even beyond that.

This is the concept of the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, where both karma as well as a long life are considered essential. Some people get so tired of living because of their erroneous conduct that they wish to relieve themselves of life. Their life is a continuous tussle between *raga*, attachment, and *vairagya*, non-attachment, to sensorial and sensual passions. Life becomes gloomy for them, for they do not possess any love for their karma. If you begin to feel exertion while performing karmas, you may become pessimistic. That will prevent you from enjoying the reward of your karmas to the fullest.

A pessimistic person repents even after having achieved everything in the world. He fears death despite being under the care of the best physician. The fear of losing his wealth will constantly haunt the pessimist, who is rich. The pessimist has a great fear of and attachment to life. This is known as *abhinivesha* in yoga. The more a man is attached to life, the more defeated and deprived he feels. Sometimes when this feeling overcomes a person, he may even be driven towards suicide. Modern psychology holds the same view. Optimists welcome death when it arrives, but until then, they are free of all thoughts about it. Such people sail through life with complete freedom. Divine knowledge and talents unfold in the lives of such people. We must move with life and not have disregard and indifference towards the life that we have been given.

Although everyone wants to live long, the karmas are such that they make life short. Karmas have their philosophy, which is indeed a great viewpoint. Though advocating the

performance of work and action may have its own importance to the authorities from the point of social production, it also has a spiritual importance. Karma is a powerful means for the destruction of the impressions, the *samskaras*, in the mind. The destruction of *vasanas* accumulated over many lifetimes is possible only through karma. *Vasanas* are the sum total of the different kinds of good and bad actions accumulated over many lifetimes. Karma relates not only to the body, but also to the *jīva*, the individual consciousness. Every karma is preceded by the thought for the karma. This affects our organs of perception and action, the *indriyas*. It is then that we perform that karma.

The question now arises: from where does the thought originate in our mind? Materialists attribute these thoughts to social circumstances. In reality, the actual origin of these thoughts is within the individual, even though the external factors may act as the catalyst to spark them off. Thoughts arise in our mind when *vasanas* buried deep in the individual consciousness awaken on contact with the external environment. According to Vedānta, these *vasanas* constitute the subtle body or the *sukshma sharīra*. *Vasanas* may either be annihilated or intensified. This is why they get so intensified that the end seems impossible. Whereas on one hand, the *karmas* destroy *samskaras*, they also create new *samskaras*. The baggage of karma *vasana* sometimes becomes light and sometimes heavy. Therefore, the scriptures say that if karma is performed with the attitude of non-attachment or non-identification, it will not lead to new *vasanas*.

Yogi Nāgarjuna was once asked the question, “When does the *jīva* create new karma and when not?” He explained that if the seeds were sown in an appropriate climate, in a field treated with the proper fertilizers, the production would be high. If the same seeds fell on the boundary line, the plant would grow, but would soon perish. If the same seed were baked in a pan before sowing, despite the best conditions it would not even germinate. Similarly, if the seeds of karma are fried in the pan of non-attachment, the sprouts of

samskara will not grow from them. However, if the seeds are sown in the field of ignorance and attachment, the crop will yield a hundred-fold and the burden of one's samskaras will grow even heavier.

Karma has a great significance in the tradition of evolution. Those who accept karma as sadhana or worship grow in strength in every aspect. Karma is the symbol of one's lack of control over nature. Whether willing or not, karmas have to be done. If karma is physically abandoned, one will still be performing karma mentally. If even thought is abandoned, it will lead to mental disorder. Therefore, there is no way other than that of karma for attaining *moksha* or salvation. This is a very strict and prominent border drawn by our philosophical principles. A German philosopher once said that the Indian philosophy, which is known for its magnanimity, becomes very forceful on this point. In this regard, Shankaracharya has said that we will have to understand the context of the teachings in this Upanishad in order to grasp the larger meaning.

The *Ishavasya Upanishad* is the fortieth Samhita of the *Yajur Veda*. The preceding thirty-nine Samhitas are devoted to *karma kanda*, the science of ritual more suited to the renunciate. Therefore, the fortieth Samhita was written for the benefit of those who are engaged in karma. It was not written for saints, ascetics, renunciates, and those who have conquered their passions and desires. Neither was it written for those who have gone beyond the influence of karma. For such people, the *vairagis* who have risen above the occurrences of the world, *jnana marga*, the path of raja yoga, is more appropriate. For those who are physically capable, there is the path of hatha yoga. For the emotional person, the path of devotion or bhakti is appropriate. For those who are engrossed in petty, self-serving activities twenty-four hours a day, which path other than karma is suitable for them?

However, on the path of action the accumulation of karma and samskara is inevitable, despite being extremely

alert. Karma is like a chamber of soot, where one is constantly getting stained. This is why saints have suggested recourse in *viveka*, discrimination, and *vairagya*, non-attachment. Otherwise, being affected by the actions and reactions of karma is inevitable. The karmas manifest in various forms in due time. Some karmas may appear in the form of physical ailments. Others are not experienced externally, but they manifest in the behaviour, in the thought process or during dreams. The karmas remain in the mind in seed form and germinate on getting the appropriate conditions.

Although we may see the karma, it is possible that we may not be able to see its reaction. There is an invisible bond between karma and its fruit. No one can see what happens between the execution of karma and the manifestation of its reaction. It is an ongoing process of action and reaction. It is indeed a mysterious process, which continually progresses into the invisible, like sound waves. Our karmas produce an effect that overpowers our mind, and they lead accordingly to more actions and reactions. Until one becomes devoid of karma and until vasanas come to an end, one has to go through the compulsions of karma.

Another important factor is that our karmas should not be influenced by the ego. The feeling of doership becomes the cause for bondage, whether it is a sinful or a virtuous act. Whether the handcuffs are made of gold or steel, both achieve the same aim of binding. Therefore, even as one performs karma, one should feel that 'I am not the doer, but the medium through which the karma is being done'. In this way, karma becomes a source of divine inspiration in life and does not cause stress, worry or fatigue. There are two types of karmic reactions. One is the influence of karma, which can be negated with the help of discrimination or *viveka*, and the other is known as *karmaleshya*, and can be discarded only by those who attain freedom from the cycle of birth and death. The Vedas have discussed this subject in several places.

The essence of this discussion is that if an individual's karmas are virtuous and performed with knowledge, he will not be a victim of bondage. It is necessary to perform karmas with the feeling of service and renunciation. A sannyasin must have the spirit of sacrifice and a householder of service. Wishing to live for a hundred years with the spirit of service produces a good effect on the vasanas or desires. Apart from doing good to others, it leads to self-development. At the time of death, all the services rendered present themselves in the form of light before the person. This light directs the body of desires, the *vasana sharira*, to a household where it attains a beautiful new birth.

When an individual accepts the supreme governance of Ishwara and feels His omnipresence, when he serves in his life with restraint and without greed or attachment, his karmas do not become the cause of bondage to him.

Mantra 3: Sunless World of Ignorance

असूर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसाऽऽवृताः ।
तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥ ३ ॥

*Asooryaa naama te lokah andhena tamasaa aavritaah;
Taanste pretyaabhigachchhanti ye ke chaatmahano janaah.*

Anvay

Asooryaah: demonical; *Naama*: known; *Lokaah*: existences; *Tè*: they; *Andhena tamasaa*: by blinding darkness; *Aavritaah*: are enveloped; *Ye ke cha*: whosoever; *Aatmahanah*: who do not believe in the Atman; *Janaah*: persons; *Ste*: they; *Pretya*: after the dissolution of their bodies; *Taan*: to those existences; *Abhigachchhanti*: truly depart.

Translation

After the dissolution of their bodies, those persons who do not believe in the Atman depart to demonical planes, enveloped by blinding darkness.

Commentary

People who kill their spiritual or inner identity go to lower existences that are engulfed in darkness. Those who evaluate their life on the basis of the past, worry about the future, and remain at a high level of anxiety in the present may end up destroying their spiritual nature, which is real suicide. What existed yesterday does not exist today, and what exists today will not exist tomorrow. However, forgetting this principle, the individual despairs of life and meets a dark fate. Such a person, who has too much attachment to the material body or has experienced only despair, may even terminate his life in an untimely way.

There are millions of people who are tired of life and cannot wait for it to end. They are also killers of the self. These are people who experience no love and compassion

in life, who receive only pain, and die without appreciation or respect. Such souls find no peace, even at death, and their souls continue to wander after death. In this case, the *vasana sharira*, the subtle body of desires, remains engulfed in a dark veil. The next station of birth remains uncertain for them, as they grope in the absence of a guiding light. When the *vasana sharira* detaches from the body after death, it falls into a faint, because it no longer has any knowledge or identity. Very soon, it also loses its mobility and its condition becomes similar to that of a football, which is unable to move without being kicked.

However, nature has provided a means to carry this body called the *karana sharira*, the causal body, which is an accumulation of man's karmas over many lifetimes. Karmas performed several births ago remain unused and stored in seed form. These old seeds lose their original identity and remain relegated to the *karana sharira*, even for fifty births. These *samskaras* are not only of intensely evil or virtuous acts, but also of ordinary karma. The total aggregate of such *samskaras* constitutes the *karana sharira*. Its colour is similar to that of smoke and its form is like that of a shadow. There is no moving light within it, but it is capable of carrying the *vasana sharira* like a railway engine. The *karana sharira* is the travelling companion of the *vasana sharira*, and it has an intense desire to take birth. The pessimists who desire to take birth are afraid of life, and also of eventual death, so this causes a kind of contraction in their *karana sharira*.

The desire to take birth is a natural quality of the *jivatma*, the individual soul. However, the bitter and painful experiences of previous births, and the defeats at the hand of circumstances that drove it to self-destruction, cause an obstruction to the natural course of the *karana sharira*. After death, the *karana sharira* does not move away from the dead body as long as it remains in the house, as it cherishes a strong desire to re-enter the same body that it is familiar with. After the destruction of the body, if there is a pregnancy in the same family at around the same time,

the karana sharira quickly enters into the unborn child. For this reason, abstinence is practised in Indian households upon an incident of death in the family. They try to ward off the re-entry of the Atman of the deceased person into their house.

The karana sharira needs a shelter after death, and with the desire to take birth, it does not want to go far. Despite the Atma being the entity of truth, it may get trapped in a wrong place. The condition of the soul is similar to that of a hungry and thirsty traveller who alights from a bus and enters the first hotel he finds to quell his hunger and thirst, no matter how dismal it may be. The vasana sharira of devoted, evolved, virtuous and renunciate saints remains alert and conscious, even after death. However, the vasana sharira of persons of an inferior level of evolution is devoid of consciousness and must depend completely on the karana sharira after death. The vasana sharira goes where the karana sharira goes. If the karana sharira marches ahead and enters the womb of a mother, the vasana sharira follows suit.

However, if the karana sharira is stricken by despair or fear of life, it remains stalled at the same place. Therefore, the scriptures say that the karana sharira must be expanded; its intrinsic fear must be removed. It must be made to feel that its next birth promises to be good. The vasana sharira of those who have done good deeds is not devoid of hope. Its perception is somewhat similar to that of a person who has consumed a small amount of hemp and is under a slight intoxication. Even in that state, the vasana sharira of the devotee or saint remains in motion. It remembers its vasana karmas, its desires, and marches ahead by itself in search of a mother. Even if the souls of the pessimists retain some consciousness, they wander arbitrarily in darkness, without any purpose.

The mental state of a person produces an effect not only during life, but also after death. The magnetism of the personality depends on the aura surrounding the person,

which expands, contracts and changes colour according to the thought processes. If the state of mind is healthy, the aura may take on a certain colour. If there is despair, fear or anger in the mind, the aura may take on another colour. In the same way, the karana sharira also changes, expands and contracts. The qualities of fearlessness, faith and optimism cause the karana sharira to expand. We should understand that the self of every person is divine. Socrates said, “Know thyself.” This is the best way to remove fear and pessimism. Ramana Maharshi used to say only one thing to all those who came to him, “Think to yourself, who am I?” The moment you realize that ‘I am the Atman, the Supreme Spirit’, instantly the source of pessimism and fear will vanish from you forever.

Mantra 4: Omnipresent Self

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत् ।
तद्भावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठतस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥ 4 ॥

*Anejadekam manaso javeeyo nainaddevaa aapnuvan poorvamarshat;
Taddhaavato nyaanatyeti tishthat tasminnapo maatarishvaa
dadhaati.*

Anvay

Tat: the Self; *Anejat*: unmoving; *Ekam*: is one; *Javeeyah*: is faster; *Manasah*: than the mind; *Poorvam*: the original cause; *Arshat*: knower of all or source of wisdom; *Enat*: to it; *Devah*: even the deities (of the senses); *Na aapnuvan*: cannot reach; *Tat*: it; *Anyaan*: to other, to those; *Dhaavatah*: runners; *Tishthat*: being in its own place; *Atyeti*: reaches out; *Tasmin*: in it; *Maatarishvaa*: all-pervading air; *Apah*: water, rains; *Dadhaati*: supports the activities (of the world).

Translation

The Self is one. It is unmoving, yet faster than the mind. Even the deities (of the senses) cannot reach it. It is the original cause and the knower of all. Although stationed in its own place, it reaches out to those who run. It is the all-pervading air and supports the activities of the world, like water and rain (the karmas and their outcome).

Commentary

The Atma is *achala*, steady, permanent and immovable, and yet it moves faster than the mind. Despite being motionless, it runs faster than anyone who chases it. It is faster, and beyond the reach of even the divine deities like Indra. Due to its all-pervasive nature, the basic elements like water and sun perform their functions within its fold. The Atma holds the basic five elements within itself, as the sea holds water. The question now arises: who or what is this Atma?

In Indian philosophy the term ‘atma’ has been used in three contexts. First, when it is said that the Atma is immortal, the word ‘atma’ refers to the Supreme Consciousness. Second, when it is said that the Atma abandons one body and goes to another or continues to wander, Atma refers to the *vasana sharira*. Third, in the *Bhagavad Gita* it says, “Lift the Atma by the Atma.” In this context it has been used for the faculties of mind and intelligence. The Atma referred to here is beyond the reach of the sense organs.

Materialists will not recognize the existence of anything beyond the reach of the senses. Even among Indian philosophies, there is an atheistic philosophy known as Charvaka that believes in only four basic elements of creation, instead of the usual five. It does not recognize the *akasha*, or space element, because it is invisible and intangible. Indian philosophy begins at this very point. Where is the need for analysis and discussion about the existence of something that is directly perceptible by the senses? It is really the imperceptible power that requires analysis.

Such discussions have taken place at many points in the Upanishads. The one who desires to know about the invisible truth asks for it to be shown to him. At all such instances it has been stated that truth is not perceivable by the *indriyas*, the sense organs. Everything in this world that is perceivable by the *indriyas* is *maya*. How can that be Brahman, the eternal and therefore true in all the three times, past, present and future? For example, *vichara*, thought, is ever-changing. The gross object is perceptible by the sense organs. The subtle is intelligible by mind and intelligence. The extremely subtle is perceived only by experience.

The gross and large in size is *sthoola* and the small or subtle is *sukshma*. The Atma has no shape or size, for that which has a shape is also limited. For this reason, the experience of one’s deity in deep meditation takes place in three ways: First, in the form of shadow or light. This is the mental form of one’s *vrittis* or attitude. The second is

in the form or shape of the deity. This is the form of the experiences of the devotee. The third is beyond light and form. This is the true form of the Atma. The Atma is an all-pervading, universal truth, and for this experience one need not go anywhere.

The speed of the mind is greater than light. The information of the entire universe can be stored in it within a split second. According to the system of transmission of thoughts, the time taken to transmit a thought to the recipient is no more than the time taken to simply think and visualize the thought. One who knows how to think and transmit the waves can encircle the entire universe three times in a second. However, the Atma is even faster than this. The mind is *ekadeshiya*, which means that it occupies one place at one point of time. In order to march forward it has to pierce through the atmosphere and therefore it takes time, whereas the omnipresent need not go anywhere in order to reach a place. Therefore, where is the question of it taking time?

Deities, or gods, do not know this Atma. The Puranas mention the word *devata*, which means god. The gods, like Indra, Varuna and others, are symbols of worldly phenomena; however, according to the spiritual viewpoint, the organs of perception are also gods. The word 'devata' or 'deva' has been derived from the Sanskrit root *div*, meaning 'to shine'. The organs of cognition exist in the earthly or terrestrial world. This is the first level of *chetana*, consciousness. The second level of consciousness is where the basis of knowledge is the mind and not the senses. Similarly, there are fourteen levels of consciousness, seven higher and seven lower. There is a perceiver of each loka, called the *devata*, who is the lord of that dimension and is luminous. That is why the indriyas or the sense organs have been called devata.

There are five organs of perception, the *jnanendriyas*, and five organs of action, the *karmendriyas*. Apart from these ten gross organs, there also exist subtle organs. This subtle

expression is where the saying, 'It walks without feet and hears without ears' applies. All actions are performed by the subtle indriyas, which also experience the five elements, and are accessible and easily comprehended. The devatas are subtler than these. They remain in all the states of *sthoola*, gross; *sukshma*, subtle; and *karana*, causal. The gross organs are the hands, legs, etc., and the subtle organs are the mind and intelligence. Even subtler are the organs through which we experience dreams, and still subtler are those through which yogis experience the myriad states of *dhyana*, deep meditation.

Thus the awareness belonging to the various lokas is called devata. That special plane of consciousness is the path of spiritual experiences. Yet despite being so subtle, these indriyas cannot reach the Atma, which is beyond even the seven lokas. There are seven stages of individual consciousness called the *saptalokas*. They are: bhu, bhuvah, swah, mahah, janah, tapah and satya. These seven planes of consciousness are also known as *sapta jnana bhumikas*. The individual consciousness reaches these seven lokas which are perceived in the various stages of dhyana. However, the Atma is beyond these and exists where the indriyas cannot reach. The Atma can be perceived only after crossing these seven planes of consciousness. In order to explain this, the Christian scriptures say, "The house of our Father is beyond the seventh sky." This is not the dwelling point of ordinary consciousness.

When the auspicious desire for higher spiritual understanding spontaneously arises in the practitioner without the help of a guru, it should be understood that he has stepped on to the first plane of consciousness. If material things are seen during dhyana, it means that the consciousness is in the lower lokas. Who is the experiencer in these states? Who sees the scenes in dreams? There can be no perception without the medium of the indriyas. The gross body contains gross indriyas and the subtle body contains subtle indriyas. Even in the state of savikalpa samadhi, there is an existence

of devata. If the perceiver is absent, who will perceive the experience? Who is it that perceives Shiva, Krishna or guru in the state of dhyana?

During the perception of an experience, three things are essential: *dhyana*, the meditation, *dhyeya*, the object of meditation, and *dhyata*, the meditator. This is the same as *jnana*, knowledge, *jneya*, knowledge to be known, and *jnata*, the knower. In yogic scriptures, the meeting point of these three factors is called *triputi*, the triple manifestation of the supreme unity. In the course of experiences, the yogi initially has the experience of *sakara*, Supreme Consciousness in form. Subsequently, his experience takes place with *chhaya*, shadow form. After purification, he experiences light. Beyond this he sees the *antah purusha*, the Brahman. Finally, when the consciousness is completely pure and refined, nothing is left to be seen. All perceptions come to an end.

Mantra 5: Moving yet Unmoving

तदेजति तन्नैजति तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके ।
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥ ५ ॥

*Tadejati tannaijati taddoore tadvantike;
Tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyaasya baahyatah.*

Anvay

Tat: that (Atman); *Ejati*: moves; *Tat*: that; *Na ejati*: does not move; *Tat*: that; *Doore*: is far away; *Tat*: that; *Antike*: is also nearest; *Tat*: that; *Asya sarvasya*: of this whole world; *Antah*: is present within; *Tat*: that; *Asya sarvasya*: of this whole world; *Baahyatah*: is also outside.

Translation

That (Atman) moves and also does not move. That (Atman) is the farthest and also the nearest. That (Atman) is present within this whole world and is also outside.

Commentary

This mantra describes the great capability of the Atma. It moves and also does not move. It is extremely far and also near. It pervades the entire universe within and without. The same idea is paraphrased in the *Bhagavad Gita* (13:15):

*Bahirantashcha bhutanamacharam chameva cha,
Sukshmatvattadavijneyam durastham chantike cha tat.*

This means, “On account of its (the Atma’s) subtle nature, it is both within and without, it is both moving and not moving, it is both far and near, and it is inscrutable.” The Atma seems to contain contradictory qualities, but if seen in depth, it is found that these qualities are not contradictory. There are various ways to understand the Atma. One method is by reason and the other is by experience. Experiential knowledge is the best way.

All the elements in the world have originated from the Atma. Just as the earthen pot is created out of clay, similarly, the five elements of creation are born out of this very Atma. Prior to the elements, their essence, the five *tanmatras*, were created and their existence is extremely subtle. The five *tanmatras* are transformed into the five basic elements. When they begin to vibrate, they become relatively gross. Then these elements begin to unite with one another in various permutations and combinations to produce the manifest creation. The proportion in which the five elements unite is as follows. One unit of an element is divided into two halves. One half remains that pure element. The second half is divided into four parts and each part is combined in equal measure with one of the remaining four elements. Therefore, the composition of each element is derived from 50 percent of that pure element + 50 percent combination of the other four elements.

This process is known as *panchikarana*, and many combinations were formed in this process. For example:

- The combination of 1/2 part ether and 1/8th part each of air, fire, water and earth was used to form the mind and intelligence.
- The combination of 1/2 part air and 1/8th part each of the other four elements was used to form the organs of perception, the *jnanendriyas*.
- The combination of 1/2 part fire and 1/8th part each of the other elements was used to form the organs of action, the *karmendriyas*.

The process of combination of the five elements continues further to produce the gross body. The body is gross, the *karmendriyas* are subtler, the *jnanendriyas* are even subtler, and the mind and intelligence are even subtler. The elements themselves are subtler than the mind. The ego or *ahamkara* is subtler than the elements. Subtler than ego is *mahat*, the higher intelligence. Even subtler is *moola prakriti*, the unmanifest or original source of the material world, which is *trigunatmika*, consisting of three *gunas*: *sattwa*, *rajas*

and tamas. However, the subtlest element of creation is *Ishwara*, the non-decaying, divine principle.

The Maya of Brahman initially makes the five elements meet by virtue of her nature. These five elements came into existence at the time of the creation of the universe by no other power than the Atman itself. The Upanishad says that this very Atman holds the water and air. The question is, like the potter and the clay, whether Brahman and Maya are two different entities that constitute creation. Was there a maker, who collected material and made creation? The scriptures express several views on this issue. One view is that the lokas and everything within the purview of knowledge are the exhalation (outward expansion) of Brahman.

Another view is that just as sparks are produced from burning charcoal, this manifest creation has similarly splintered out of Brahman. It has also been said that everything in creation belongs to Him. All of creation has been born out of Him and will dissolve back into Him, in the same way that a spider emits a cobweb from within itself and again withdraws it into itself. However, none of these arguments are acceptable to the Upanishad. The Upanishad holds that just as a magician produces many things without having any real base through tricks and powers of hypnotism, and again makes them disappear, so too is creation a trick of Brahman's Maya, having no other base.

A similar question has been posed in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. There it is examined whether Purusha and Prakriti or Brahman and Maya are two different entities or one and the same. The Upanishads, Samkhya and traditional yoga shastras have dealt with this question in different ways. In yoga philosophy, the great sage Patanjali has maintained *dvaita vada*, the theory of dualism, in answer to this. He has maintained that Purusha, Prakriti and jiva are eternal elements. The Samkhya philosophy has maintained the theory of dualism by recognizing Purusha and Prakriti separately as eternal. When Purusha and Prakriti are

described, they seem to be two different entities, but a closer, scientific or even a philosophical approach reveals both to be one.

Although fire and its heat, the sun and its light, the *jiva* or the living being, and its life seem to be two different entities, they are in fact one and the same. The one is of no importance without the other, which is its essential attribute. Similarly, Shankaracharya has written in the first verse of *Saundarya Lahari* that without Shiva there is no existence of Shakti, and without Shakti there is no expression of Shiva. Matter cannot exist without energy and energy cannot manifest without matter. So, Brahman and Maya are inseparable, although the ignorant novices sometimes acknowledge them as two separate entities.

Samkhya says Prakriti is blind and Purusha is lame. Climbing on the shoulders of the blind, the lame moves forward. Prakriti is animate and Purusha inanimate. Prakriti is animate, despite being blind, as it possesses the power of action and motion. Despite being conscious, Purusha is inactive. Thus the consciousness combines with the energy to sustain creation. This activity of Prakriti is the *panchikarana* process of the five elements. They combine with one another in a natural way and produce a motion known as *gharshana* or rubbing. From this, a third substance is produced, which is the effect of Prakriti. No two eternal truths can coexist in the universe and if they do, then why should they not be understood as one? This is a simple rule of mathematics.

Prakriti does exist, but not as the cause of creation. Rather, Prakriti has been born from within Brahman, the non-decaying, transcendental principle. The multiplicity in the five tattwas, in manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, the five jnanendriyas, the five karmendriyas, the five pranas and in the bodily variations is due to the Maya of Brahman. The discrimination between the multiplicity created by Maya ends after the dawn of jnana or knowledge. Brahman cannot be understood by the intellect; direct perception is necessary for

that. Similarly, you cannot experience the taste of a chocolate by reading a book on it.

In the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, the guru advises the pupil that in order to have a direct perception of Brahman, he should reflect that Brahman pervades the entire universe, and consider it his *sadhana*, his spiritual practice, to have this idea at the centre of his heart. Atman is the Ultimate Truth. It is nearer than the nearest for the one who has experienced it, and farther than the farthest for the ignorant who have not experienced it. It is far for those engrossed in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures and near for those who take pleasure in experiencing the Atman. It is one's own Atman and, therefore, its perception is to be experienced within one's own self.

Just as water and fluidity are not two different things, Atman and Brahman are also not two, but one. When the Atman is searched for, away from oneself, it is far. But when it is searched for within oneself, in the form of Parameshvara, it is very near. The saying goes: *Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati* – “On knowing you (Brahman), one becomes you.” Also: *Janat tumahi tumahi hoi jae* – “The one who experiences the Atma becomes Brahman or Ishwara Himself.” Our body, sense organs, thoughts are all destined to perish one day, but the Atman remains forever. It pervades everything within and outside itself. An invisible ocean of consciousness is swirling all around us, and we exist in it exactly like a fish in water. The Atman exists in this world as the all-pervading element.

The Atman and the elements are not different from each other. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, it is said that the one whose body is water (and other elements) itself, and who exercises control over water (and other elements) by entering into it, but remains unknown by water (and other elements), that Atman is eternal and omniscient. Similarly, one who has a body, and who is in the body, whom the body knows not, being in the body is other than the body, is the Atma, who pervades and rules over all.

The great King Janaka once announced in his court that he who proved himself to be the wisest person would receive 10,000 milch cows with golden horns. All the supposedly wise in his presence remained silent. Suddenly, the great Sage Yajnyavalkya instructed his pupil to drive away the cows. In response to this an intense spiritual discussion followed. The wise people present stood up one by one and flooded Yajnyavalkya with a number of questions. The sage answered all the questions to everyone's satisfaction. Finally Gargi, the knowledgeable and wise lady of the time, got up and started to ask existential questions:

Gargi: What is that which is mingled in the earth?

Yajnyavalkya: Water.

Gargi: And what is that which is mingled in water?

Yajnyavalkya: Fire.

Gargi: And in fire?

Yajnyavalkya: Air.

Gargi: And in air?

Yajnyavalkya: Ether.

Gargi: And in ether?

Yajnyavalkya: Mahat or supreme intelligence.

Gargi: And in mahat?

Yajnyavalkya: Ahamkara or ego.

Gargi: And in ahamkara?

Yajnyavalkya: Moola prakriti.

Gargi: And in moola prakriti?

Yajnyavalkya: Avyakta or the unmanifest.

Gargi: What is avyakta made of?

At this stage Yajnyavalkya replied with passion: Gargi, now you are asking vexing questions!

Nevertheless, to end the debate Yajnyavalkya replied, "The avyakta is *akarana karana*, the causeless cause." meaning Atman/Brahman, and drove away the cows. *Avyakta* is the cause of all creation, but there cannot be any cause for avyakta. When avyakta develops, gradually the universe is formed. This element of avyakta is called Paramatma. After manifestation, it is called *srishti* or *vyakta*, manifest creation.

If the *atma tattwa*, the Atma element, were taken out of creation, nothing would remain.

The Atman is both within and without. Here the words 'within' and 'without' carry two special meanings. When the individual consciousness enters the seven internal stages, then it is considered as being within. When it comes out and externalizes itself, it is considered without. The seven internal stages are called the seven stages of spiritual consciousness. When consciousness becomes extroverted, it is called *vasana loka*, or physical consciousness. The jivatma goes to these fourteen lokas, according to its karma. The sense organs, the indriyas, are like the windows of the house of the jivatma through which it peeps out. The function of the indriyas is to extrovert the consciousness.

This mantra presents the concept of the Atman within oneself and thus the foundation of happiness and bliss is hidden within oneself. One need not go anywhere to know it nor does it require any external knowledge. The Atman is in itself the source of all knowledge. It is simply covered over by a film of ignorance. What is required is to simply remove the film of ignorance. Knowledge is greater than ignorance. But just as a small cloud, despite its size, covers the sun completely, ignorance is capable of completely covering true knowledge.

The natural tendency of human beings is to acquire knowledge. Despite this, the individual is like a drunken person, who has forgotten his true self under the intoxication of worldly pleasures. This ignorance and attachment to the world remains only until one has the experience of the Atman. Sadhana does not give knowledge; it merely removes the veil of ignorance. Discrimination is acquired through yoga, and ignorance is removed by discrimination. Yoga is accomplished by practice, and practice is done by *karma* or action.

Mantra 6: Seeing One in All

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥ 6 ॥

*Yastu sarvaani bhootaani aatmanyevaanupashyati;
Sarva bhooteshu chaatmaanam tato na vijugupsate.*

Anvay

Yah tu: whosoever; *Sarvaani bhootaani:* all beings; *Atmani eva:* in his own Atman or Self; *Anupashyati:* beholds, sees; *Cha:* and; *Sarva bhooteshu:* in all beings; *Aatmaanam:* his own Atman or Self; *Tatah:* by virtue of that perception; *Na vijugupsate:* does not feel revulsion (for any being).

Translation

He, who sees all beings in his own Atman, and recognizes his own Atman in all beings, by virtue of that, he feels no revulsion for any being.

Commentary

When the sadhaka begins to see the Atman in all beings, his opinions about life, material existence and the world at large change completely. Having acquired true knowledge, he ceases to see the sentient and insentient as two different things. In fact, there is no difference between sentient and insentient. There is the presence of sentient in insentient and insentient in sentient. The insentient is the root of the sentient and the sentient is the fruit of the insentient. This mantra describes *Brahmajnana*, the knowledge of Supreme Consciousness. In this state, man acquires *abheda drishti*, vision that makes no discrimination between things. He acquires the state of an *avadhoota*, an ascetic who has risen above all worldly attachments and connections.

While Shankaracharya was travelling through India, he once reached a town where a farmer approached him

from among the multitudes that came for darshan. The farmer was seeking help for his son who did not speak and behave like a child, playing with other children. The farmer was extremely worried and had come with the hope that Shankaracharya would help his son to become normal. After listening to his tale of woe, Shankaracharya asked the farmer to bring the boy before him. When the boy came, Shankaracharya asked him, “*Kastvam?*” (“Who are you?”) and the boy replied:

*Naham manushyo na cha deva yakshah
Na brahmano kshatriya vaishya shudrah
Naham grihastho na cha vanaprasthah
Svatmanandaiva nijabodharoopah.*

I am not human, divine, or demi-god;
Not Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra am I.
I am neither householder nor renunciate,
but the one who enjoys bliss within his Atman.

Hearing this, Shankaracharya assured the farmer that there was no need to worry about his son. There was nothing wrong with the boy. He had attained the state of avadhoota, and had taken this human body only to work out some desires leftover from previous births.

Vision or *drishti* is of two kinds: one is *bhedadrishti*, the discriminating vision, and the other is *abhedadrishti*, vision that transcends discrimination. Bhedadrishti confers the ability to discriminate between different things. The sense organs, in association with the mind and intellect, give birth to bhedadrishti, and so are able to differentiate between things. Through these faculties one can differentiate between good and bad smells, for example. However, in spiritual life, bhedadrishti ends when the activities of the sense organs subside, and abhedadrishti arises. Then there is no differentiation between good and bad smell, sight, taste, touch or sound. This state is known as *samabhava* or *abhedadarshana* in Vedanta.

Every object primarily has two forms: mayaroopa and brahmaroopa. The *brahamaroopa* is invisible, therefore it is also known as *indriyatitaroopa*, that which is beyond the perception of the senses. The *mayaroopa* is also known as *aindrikaroopa*, that which is perceivable by the senses. The Brahmajnani, those who experience the Supreme Consciousness, see only the invisible or indriyatita form. The mayaroopa in each one of us is different, but the Brahmaroopa is the same in all. That is the conscious entity of the human being. How can there be any difference in that? The vision of every individual is in accordance with one's state of evolution. Some focus on the physique, some on intelligence, and some on *pratibha*, the inner spiritual intensity and clarity. Some cannot see beyond wealth, yet others can perceive the Atman. As long as one lives in *mayaloka*, the world of illusion, one discriminates, but on attaining Brahmajnana, the Supreme knowledge, a change takes place in one's inner nature and vision of life. One completely loses all hatred towards any other.

Hatred is a mental aberration, like a shadow of the human personality. When we hate someone, we try to prove that the person really deserves it. Our own feelings and attitudes are buried deep within us and occasionally they surface. These can be identified through introspection and meditation. Invisible feelings of guilt that remain buried and unnoticed within us may surface at any time and generate hatred within us. When knowledge of the Self arises, the mind is purged completely and guilt is removed. Naturally such a person does not hate others. We speak ill of others due to *bhedadrishti*, vision of others as different from ourselves. But when we are able to experience *abheda*, non-difference and identification with the Brahmaroopa, the form beyond the distinctions of maya, then no other exists to hate. There is only the experience of unity with everybody and everything.

Hatred can never be removed by hatred; it can only be replaced by love. The one who knows how to love is

eventually victorious. The generation of love and removal of hatred is an expression of *atmabhava*, the original nature of the Self. No one can become Brahman by merely assuming that he is Brahman. It requires a *sankalpa*, a firm resolve, and the development of *atmabhava*. If one aspires for mental and social purity, happiness and success in life, it is essential to eliminate the feeling of hatred towards others. This is a social and spiritual truth. One should nurture the feeling of friendship, even for the enemy. Critical, unethical and bad behaviour must not be avenged. One must be firm in one's resolve. Such an aspiration, if adhered to, becomes second nature in time. It becomes a spontaneous part of life, and Brahmajnana, or the knowledge of Brahman, begins to develop and evolve constantly in that person. These have been the qualities of those great people who have experienced emancipation in life.

Mantra 7: Unity of the Self

यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।

तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥ 7 ॥

Yasmin sarvaani bhootaanyaatmaivaabhoodvijaanatah;

Tatra ko mohah kah shokah ekatvamanupashyatah.

Anvay

Yasmin: to the person; *Vijaanatah:* who is the knower; *Sarvaani bhootani:* all beings; *Aatma eva abhoot:* become one with his own Self; *Tatra:* there, in that situation; *Ekatvam anupashyatah:* to the person who constantly perceives the unity; *Kah mohah:* what delusion (remains); *Kah shokah:* what sorrow (remains).

Translation

To the person who is the knower, all beings are one with his own Self. In that person who constantly perceives the unity, what delusion and what sorrow remain?

Commentary

On attaining a particular stage in spiritual life, one begins to see the Atman in all beings. In that state, both delusion and grief end. This is the state of Brahmajnana, the state of true knowledge. There is a difference between a Brahmashrotriya and a Brahmajnani. A *Brahmashrotriya* is well-versed and proficient in the Vedas, whereas a *Brahmajnani* is the knower of Brahman. Such a soul rarely comes into this world. His very nature and attributes are completely different. He sees only the Atman in every being. The entire wealth of the world cannot compare with the value of his knowledge. When a Brahmajnani lives amongst us, he casts an extraordinary impression by his mere presence. His powers are unlimited; he acts as the mobile power of Ishwara, the Supreme Force. The Brahmajnani considers everyone as none other than himself. His heart is an ocean of compassion and

benevolence. The *yuga* or the time in which a Brahmajñani lives is fortunate, because it has a saviour.

The previous mantra refers to the state of *jivanmukta*, and here the state of *videhamukta* (Brahmajñana) is described. The *jivanmukta* is a great man, who has the knowledge of *loka* and *aloka*, both this world and the spiritual world. He remains non-attached and therefore is completely different from the common man, who is attached to this world. The *jivanmukta* sees the world, but does not acknowledge it. He stays within himself, and peeps out through a hole at the world. He resides in the Atman, but at the same time he also has the requisite experience of the world. In contrast, the *videhamukta* perceives only the Atman, and not the world. Just as the dream appears to be an illusion upon awakening, the *videhamukta* while living in the world perceives the world as an illusion.

The *jivanmukta* is free of all hatred. The *videhamukta* is free of *moha* and *shoka*, delusion and sorrow. Both experience the state of oneness with the Atman, but in the case of the *jivanmukta*, traces of *prarabdha karma*, the karma which has been accumulated in the past, still remains awaiting transformation. The *videhamukta*, however, has already destroyed all the *prarabdha* karmas and is beyond the bondage of karma. When the aspirant attains this state, he perceives the entire world as Brahman. On becoming a *videhamukta*, instead of perceiving the Atman in all beings, or all beings in the Atman, one begins to experience that beings are the Atman itself. The state of unity described in the preceding mantra may be termed *sambhava*, the experience of equality and oneness, and this experience of the *videhamukta* is termed *antarbhava*, the experience of internalized identity.

Sorrow is a distracted state of mind caused by loneliness. On the basis of yoga or Indian psychology, it may be said that sorrow or grief is the motivating factor in life. All the thoughts, activities and endeavours of human beings have their source in an invisible sorrow. This is present within us in the form of a seed and chases humankind like a ghost

due to the eternal nature of desires. Whatever be the visible reason for the sorrow of human beings, the actual reason is not what we see with our eyes. The loneliness of the jiva came into the world along with it. When the jiva was in the state of *moola prakriti*, unmanifest prakriti, even then it experienced loneliness. When the jiva was in the seed state, it was lonely. In the process of development, when the jiva reached the mineral state, it was still lonely. Stones and mountains also remain in the state of loneliness. Stones also have jiva, except that its development has not taken place.

Gradually the development of the jiva takes place and is embodied in mineral and plant life. Still it remains lonely. When it reaches the state of low-level animals, it manifests some natural propensities in order to end its loneliness. Gradually, as the embodied jiva acquires the abilities of the senses, it makes an untiring effort to remove its loneliness through the activities of the four basic instincts: *ahara*, food; *nidra*, sleep; *bhaya*, fear; and *maithuna*, sex. During the gradual and systematic development of the jiva, it evolves different sense organs at different stages. Some jivas have only one sense organ and others have two, three, four or even five sense organs. However, despite the attempt of the jiva to quell its loneliness in a spontaneous and natural way, its sorrow does not go away. When the jiva is born at the human level, the concepts of society, family, love and friendship are created with the purpose of overcoming loneliness.

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* mentions something similar; it says that when the jivatma saw its full form in creation, it felt pangs of loneliness. In order to end its loneliness, it desired to become two and divided itself into two parts, the jiva and the Atman, but still it remained ignorant of the reason for this loneliness. After separating from the Atman, the jiva continued to wander and devise ways and means to end its loneliness. However, success eluded him in this quest and the jiva remained afflicted with sorrow. Even at the animal level, the jiva had no outlet to express its loneliness. A dog feels lonely and tries to attract the love and

attention of its master to get rid of it. Human beings received clarity in this regard only after they went to an experienced person, who succeeded in ending this loneliness. That wise person said, “You will remain lonely, O jiva, until you find your companion. That companion is none other than your Self. Therefore, learn to love your Self.”

Once a Sufi saint was sitting in solitude. A man came up to him and asked, “Why are you sitting alone?” The saint replied, “Until you came, I was with my intimate friend. When you arrived, he went away, and then I became lonely.” As long as the individual remains in the world of the senses, he will be lonely. When he introverts his mind and dives deep into himself, he unites and becomes one with his Atman. This is when he finally loses his loneliness. Swami Sivananda says, “I used to feel that my companion always remains with me. Later I realized that I myself am my companion.” Shoka or sorrow is the internal pain of human life. Sometimes this sorrow becomes so acute that the person develops detachment towards worldly objects and desires. This attitude of vairagya is exactly the same experience the Buddha had, which made him leave his home in search of self-realization.

When the jivatma feels significantly separated from the Paramatma, the Supreme Soul, it forgets its true form and starts coexisting with a dissimilar and incompatible entity, thus it experiences grief. When one recognizes the sorrow in one’s life and identifies the cause of this sorrow, one begins to experience unity. The majority of experiences in life are acquired through the senses and are based on the external perceptions. *Shabda* or sound, *sparsa* or touch, *roopa* or form, *rasa* or taste and *gandha* or smell, are the direct perceptions of the sense organs. *Vichara* or thought is subtler in comparison, but it is also based on external inputs. *Smriti*, memory, is even subtler than thought, but it also has its origins in past events, which were experienced externally.

Swapna or dream is the next experience in order of subtlety, but is it really an internal experience, originating

from within? Reasoning shows that dreams do not happen on their own. Dreams originate from the thoughts, experiences and events which have occurred in life. All these perceptions and experiences that originate from outside the human being are expressions of an extroverted tendency. *Atmavritti*, on the contrary, is the propensity to dwell in the Atman and to revel in the experience of the Atman. This experience is not based on any external source. All external inputs acquired through one's past experiences have to be erased before this state can be achieved. This state is known as *atmanubhooti*.

This state of *atmanubhooti* is not obtained all of a sudden. The process begins with the practice of *pratyahara*, in which one attempts to introvert one's senses. The *indriyas* or sense organs have to be withdrawn from their contact with the sense objects. The practice of *pratyahara* is the first step towards removing sorrow from one's life. After this, one needs to discipline one's thoughts. To do this, the old memories need to be wiped out, for these memories manifest as thoughts. The *jyotipunja*, body of light, that appears during meditation is also a memory. It may not appear directly and may be accompanied by something else. This is the visual manifestation of consciousness in a form. On attaining this state, grief reduces even further and peace deepens. Gradually, the states of *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* are achieved. In *samadhi*, one experiences the unity of *jiva* with Atman.

When the practitioner's mind, consciousness, feelings and thoughts are externalized, he experiences *dvaita*, or dualism. When the *vrittis*, the mental patterns, become introverted and converge to a state where nothing is perceived, it is called *atmavritti*, the awareness of the Self. At this stage, grief ends altogether. Modern psychology has not gone deep into this aspect of psychology. Even though it accepts the supremacy of the mind, it does not accept the mind and body as two separate entities, as yoga philosophy does. Modern psychology believes that the

arising of thoughts is a physical action in the human brain. However, according to yoga philosophy, mind and body are two different elements, like a nail in a chair. Although the mind element is completely blended with the body, yogis have proved through telepathy and astral travel that mind and body are two different entities.

Western scholars who have experimented with this subject have now begun to accept that there is a certain power inside the human body that can be separated from the body and projected. The mind element is dissolved in the body, as salt in water. However, those who know the principle of crystallization can separate the salt from the water. Yogis who know how to control the mind can withdraw and isolate the mind element from the body and focus it at one point. Those with a strong heart can focus the mind at the heart. Others can focus it either at the *nabhichakra*, the navel, *bhrumadhya*, the central point between the eyebrows, or *sahasrara*, the psychic centre at the crown of the head.

When the power of the mind is focused at one point, the *chitta vrittis*, or patterns of the mind, withdraw from everywhere and converge at that point. Then they need to be transformed into *prana shakti*, the vital force, after which they can be projected. The patterns of mind are transformed by concentrating on a *mantra*, sound vibration, on a *chakra*, psychic centre, or on *devata*, the deity. In that state, nothing exists except that mantra, chakra or devata. During that state, no pain is experienced, even if a nail is driven into the body. When the *indriyas* or the organs of perception themselves do not exist, who is there to perceive at all?

Imagine that two pieces of paper are stuck together with an adhesive. If the two pieces of paper are separated, by moistening the adhesive, the third invisible thing, which is the adhesive, separates by itself. The same is the case in the state of meditation. When the mind and the body separate from each other, the third element which is absolutely different also separates, and that is the Atman. In this state

of isolation of the body and mind, the knot that ties them to the Atman is untied. This is the experience of *ekatvam anupashyatah*, or oneness with the Atman.

Some people use the power of a concentrated mind for telepathy, astral travel or even the removal of another's pain; however, yogis and sincere spiritual aspirants never do, for after accomplishing such work the focused mental power returns from the world outside to the body with double force. This results in an increase of *dehadhyasa*, a false attribution of enhanced power and importance to the body. The danger is that even though the practitioner may be the pupil of a *Brahma guru* of the highest order, his spiritual downfall is inevitable. Therefore, the yogi and spiritual practitioner are interested only in perceiving the Atman after achieving a concentrated mind.

Five steps must be accomplished to rid oneself of sorrow. One needs to develop a proper understanding of the functions of i) *manas* or mind, ii) *buddhi* or intellect, iii) *indriyas* or sense organs, iv) *smriti* or memory, and v) *swapna* or dreams. Only then is the experience of unity possible. Western scholars ignored this process and conducted extensive research into the field of psychology for obtaining mental peace, but they could not make any significant breakthrough. Modern psychology insists that it is impossible to eliminate sorrow without identifying its cause. However, according to yoga philosophy sorrow can be eliminated, even without the knowledge of its cause. Yoga holds that there are several causes of sorrow in human life, rather than only one direct, perceptible cause.

The source of sorrow is intricately branched and hidden, and requires investigation into several past lives. Sorrow is not only due to worry or mental agony. Rather, it is due to the age-long separation of the individual from the Atman. The only solution is *ekatva*, union with the Atman. The three emotional expressions of *ghrīna*, revulsion, *shoka* and *moha*, suffering and illusion, are very powerful. Everyone is suffering from *moha* and wants to be rid of it. The subject of

moha is the subject of creation itself. Moha is an inseparable element of life. In order to remove loneliness and sorrow from life, one establishes contact and company with someone or something. Constant company breeds a mental affinity. The sum total of all such mental attachments acquired through various births is called 'moha'. It is impossible to understand the extent of the power exerted by moha without proper analysis and reflection.

Shoka or sorrow originates from loneliness, whereas moha or delusion comes from attachment. The greatest moha of a man is his own life. Sage Patanjali has said in the *Yoga Sutras*: *Svarasavahi vidushopi tatharudho abhiniveshah* – "Fear and craving for life exists as much in the wise as in the ignorant." With every birth we are given life and, therefore, life has become a habit. We have developed moha for life. Our mind has permanently acquired this attitude towards life. The prime cause of all kinds of moha is fear of death and attachment to life. When fear of death vanishes from the mind of man, life becomes insignificant, and moha is instantly destroyed. That is why Vedanta lays prime emphasis on removal of dehadhyasa, the false attribution of importance to the body, as the first step towards removing moha.

Moha exists in everyone; sometimes it can even be present in sages. The constant company of somebody or something creates an attachment, and one does not like to part with it. At this point moha is born; it is a state of self-created hypnosis. One begins to form a definite opinion and attitude about someone or something. It may even be a thought or a philosophy that one develops a strong relationship with. One then begins to live in this state of hypnosis and subsequently begins to enjoy this taste in the mind.

For example, if a father develops a feeling of inflated grandeur regarding his son, his expectations from him will begin to soar. Instantly his feeling and attitude towards his son will undergo a drastic change. His mind will then be constantly preoccupied with all kinds of possibilities and aspirations for his son, seeing him sometimes as a king or

some other important person. There will be a relentless flow of such thoughts on his mental screen. Soon these thoughts will begin to flow copiously irrespective of whether he is thinking actively and consciously of his son. Gradually, he will become a victim of his own mind.

There is another effect of such moha-generated thoughts. Continuous and prolonged brooding on a particular subject, which has gripped the mind, gives rise to a feeling of mental discomfort, and after some time, negative thoughts begin to arise about the same subject. Take the case of a musician who begins to think about himself in the night. By the morning he may be the most famous musician in his world of thoughts. His imagination may begin to reach impossible heights. However, when he returns from his world of imagination, he will find himself at the same point where he started. This will give rise to disappointment and dissatisfaction. The unconscious mental pattern makes internal comparisons and the mind receives a sudden setback, pushing the person towards instability.

Thoughts often come to the mind when one is at leisure. Sometimes they are so intense that the mind cannot be diverted and is overpowered by them. A single thought may intensely circulate in the mind for days at a stretch. Sometimes certain thoughts can float on the mental waves for months together. In this state, the mind becomes engrossed and introverted to such an extent that the affected person becomes useless in the world. All hope in life ends. In this state of despair, one may even be unable to take care of their own body. Such a person has halting speech and interrupts to talk out of context about matters encircling his mind. If this problem is in initial stages it can be removed by *satsang*, the company of truth, *jnana*, true knowledge, and *tapa*, austerity. However, acute cases have little hope unless they receive the grace and blessing of some great saint, guru or God.

Emancipation from moha does not require discarding one's family or abstaining from one's duties. The sincere discharge

of duties towards one's family is not an example of moha. However, if a person constantly thinks about his family and nothing else to the point of obsession, that is definitely moha. Moha is related to *raga*, attachment, and the misconceptions arising from it. That is why it has been said in the Vedas that the cause of moha is not wealth, wife or offspring, but the vision through which we evaluate and relate with everything. There is a difference between moha and *seva* or service. A true relation between two people is not necessarily an example of moha. Earning wealth in itself is not necessarily moha either, provided it does not become an act of obsession.

This mantra says that when the same Atman is perceived in all beings, the mind becomes free from moha of all kinds. In fact, one is then inspired by the feelings of duty, service and compassion to work for the welfare and happiness of the world. One serves the family, society and the nation with the intention of establishing a good social order and creating a good environment. That is why Indian thinkers and seers have stressed the necessity of *atmadarshan* or vision of the Self, and *antaranga samadhi* or inner meditation. They have advised man to go beyond the mind and senses. Instead of creating moha for external things, man should place his aspiration in the Atman, so that life may have a meaningful purpose. When the mind is turned away from the world and directed inside, moha begins to end. To remove shoka, sorrow, whether it be light or intense, visible or invisible, one must always attempt to go inwards during meditation. Satsang is essential for the removal of moha, and it is necessary to establish clarity in one's relations. The feeling of duty and an understanding of responsibility towards one another should guide one's relations. Pleasure and pain, victory and defeat, praise and criticism, disease and death, are the unavoidable phenomena of the world. One must make all possible effort to face them, but beyond that point, one must not worry unduly about them. The solution lies in acceptance. Both shoka and moha are eventually removed by such thinking.

Mantra 8: Atman is Ever Pure

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणमस्नाविरँ शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।
कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयमभूर्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान्व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः
समाभ्यः ॥ ८ ॥

*Sa paryagaachchhukramakaayamavranamasnaviram
shuddhamapaaviddham;
Kavirmaneeshee paribhooh svayambhooryaathaatathyatorthaan
vyadadhaachchhaashvateebhyah samaabhyah.*

Anvay

Sah: he, (the Atman); *Paryagaat*: pervaded all; *Shukram*: the bright; *Akaayam*: without body; *Avranam*: flawless; *Asnaaviram*: without sinews; *Shuddham*: pure; *Apaaviddham*: untainted by sin; *Kavi*: wise; *Maneeshee*: omniscient; *Paribhooh*: all-encompassing; *Svayambhooh*: self-born; *Shaashvateebhyah samaabhyah*: since eternal times; *Yaathaatathyatah*: according to their nature and *karma*; *Arthaan*: things; *Vyadadhaat*: he has duly distributed.

Translation

He (the Atman) is all-pervading, radiant, flawless, without any body, subtle or gross, pure and untouched by evil. He is the seer, omniscient, all-encompassing and self-born. Since eternity He has duly distributed to all things their respective functions, according to their nature and karma.

Commentary

That effulgent Atman is free from all flaws. He is pure consciousness and *satchidananda*, the epitome of truth, knowledge and bliss. He appears at his own will. He is devoid of all auspicious and inauspicious karma and samskaras. He sees everything all the time. Since eternity he has been creating all things. Who is this Atman that can be perceived only in the state of sadhana? This question

has been answered in this mantra. Very few people have the perception of the Atman. This *anubhooti* or perception is known by various names such as *atmajnana*, the knowledge of the atma; *moksha*, freedom from recurring births; *kaivalya*, perfect identification with the Supreme Spirit; *nirvana*, final liberation or emancipation from matter and reunion with the Supreme Spirit; and *samadhi*, perfect absorption of thought into the object of meditation.

The Upanishads have deliberated upon this subject of Atman-Brahman. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the story of the Brahmajuni King Ajatshatru is told: Once a learned brahmin named Gargya Valashya came to the court of the king. After paying obeisance to the brahmin, the king asked him, "In which form do you know the Brahman? What is the symbol of the Ultimate, according to your conception?" The brahmin replied, "The symbol of the Brahman is the brilliance of the sun." The king was not satisfied. The brahmin then said, "It is the fluidity of water." The king again said, "No." The brahmin gave many such examples, but Ajatshatru was not satisfied. Finally the king said to the brahmin, "Follow me and I will give you the knowledge." He took him by the hand to a house where a man was in deep sleep. King Ajatshatru asked the brahmin to awaken the sleeping man. The brahmin tried several times, but the man remained asleep. The king suggested that he awaken the man by calling out his name, so the brahmin called, "Wake up, O Somadatta!" and the man woke up.

King Ajatshatru then asked the brahmin, "Where is this man right now, and where did he come from? Only he who knows this can know about Brahman. Where in the body does the consciousness reside?" The king explained that in the Upanishads it is said that a stream of *chetana*, consciousness, pervades the *sthoola*, gross body. Its centre lies in the *sukshma*, subtle body. When a man wakes up from sleep, that stream of consciousness pervades the entire gross body through the 72,000 nadis, conducting vital and mental energy. Prana travels through these nadis to pervade the

whole body and generates desire, action and perception. After hearing this, Gargya Valashya was convinced that Brahman is neither the brilliance of the sun nor the fluidity of water, but an intangible entity that can be called consciousness.

Once the king Ashvapati Kaikeyi called five brahmins separately and asked them in which form they worshipped Brahman. All of them gave different answers. One said *agni*, fire; another said *jal*, water, and so on. All explained their individual method of *upasana* or worship. Ashvapati said, “The Brahman that you worship is beyond perception of the indriyas. At best, you can develop an idea of Brahman through the indriyas, but that is not *darshan*, vision, of Brahman.”

In the *Kena Upanishad* there is the mantra:

*Yan manasa na manute yenahurmano matam
Tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidam upasate*

Upon whom the mind is unable to reflect, but through whom the mind does reflection, he alone should be known as Brahman. The knowledge gained by the indriyas cannot be the form of Brahman.

Similarly, the Atman described in this mantra of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* is beyond the realm of the body, senses and mind, and has no flaws. Normal human beings have a physical body that is subject to the laws of prakriti. They are compelled to take birth by their gross nature and samskaras. However, the Atman or pure consciousness is *shuddha*, pure. That is why the Atman is called *aprakrita*, beyond the influence of prakriti. The Atman is pure in itself and has no relation with good or bad deeds or with the impressions of previous births. This Atman has been creating all things and designating their functions since eternity. It is free from all blemishes. Nothing that it does can bind it. It is omnipresent, omniscient and the epitome of wisdom.

Mantra 9: Meditation and Karma

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायाँस्ताः ॥९॥

*Andham tamah pravishanti ye avidyaamupaasate;
Tato bhooya iva te tamo ya u vidyaayaam rataah.*

Anvay

Ye: those; *Avidyaam*: to ignorance; *Upaasate*: worship; *Andham tamah*: blinding darkness; *Pravishanti*: enter into; *Ye*: those; *Vidyaayaam*: to knowledge; *Rataah*: are devoted; *Te*: they; *Tatah u bhuyah iva*: still greater; *Tamah*: darkness (enter into).

Translation

Those who worship *avidya* (ignorance) enter into darkness and those who worship *vidya* (knowledge) enter into still greater darkness.

Commentary

What is the means of unification with the Atman? Should we adopt the path of *dhyana*, meditation, to the complete exclusion of karma in life? Is the path of karma a deterrent to self-realization? Some say that people who work hard and involve themselves in karma are condemned to ignorance. For them, work and karma are simply the means to earn money and survive in life, so how can it lead to the Atman? People with such an opinion are themselves lost in ignorance. The Vedas mention karma prior to jnana. If jnana were adequate by itself, what would be the necessity of discussing karma? A number of people have explained this in their own way. Some recognize jnana and others karma as the best way to achieve the experience of oneness with the Atman.

The two words *vidya*, meaning knowledge, and *avidya*, meaning ignorance, have been used in the Vedas in different ways. In this mantra the word 'vidya' has been used in the

context of dhyana or meditation. The Upanishads have discussed several vidyas or meditation techniques. What is known as dhyana in yoga is known as vidya in the Vedas and Upanishads. The word 'vidya' is derived from the Sanskrit root *vid*, which means 'to know'. The words 'veda', 'vijñana', and 'vidushi' are all derived from the same root. Knowing here refers to an internal process within oneself. Vidya is that inner process by which one is able to perceive what cannot be perceived through the externalized senses and the mind.

In a spiritual context, the terms vidya and avidya have been used in other ways. Terms like *satya jnana*, true knowledge; *atmanubhooti*, self-realization; *antaranga vritti*, internalized pattern of mind and *dhyana marga*, the path of meditation, have been used to describe the word 'vidya'. For avidya, terms like *mithya jnana*, false knowledge; *indriyanubhooti*, perception through sense organs; *bahiranga vritti*, extroverted pattern of mind and *karma marga*, the path of action, have been used. The *indriyas* or senses are the means of knowing about external things which relate with the outer world. Through the eyes we get the perception of form, from the ears, sound; the nose, smell; the tongue, taste; the skin, touch; and from the mind we get thought. These external perceptions relate to avidya. External knowledge perceived by the senses is not true in all the three *kalas* or times of past, present and future. This knowledge is also not perceived uniformly, for it is subject to the understanding of the mind and intellect. The more developed the mind, the more knowledge it will acquire.

Karmas or actions provide an experience of and a connection to the external world; therefore, they have been termed avidya. During meditation the *vrittis* or mental patterns turn in towards the Self, enabling inner knowledge to arise; therefore, this path has been called vidya. The mantra states that the constant mental and sensory experiences gained through the karma marga lead one into blinding darkness. However, renouncing karma to practise continuous meditation leads to even denser darkness. It

is worth questioning what exactly is this *andham tamah* or blinding darkness.

During dhyana some sadhakas enter the state of *laya*, total dissolution of mind, and others enter the state of *jada chetana*. These are indeed states of darkness. Other sadhakas reach the path of light and form. Gradually, this form becomes so distinct that it may be termed as *darshan*, direct vision of the deity.

Those people who do not believe in the subtle dimensions beyond the perception of the senses and remain engrossed in sensory pleasures do not attain vidya. Their condition is similar to that of a drunken man who collapses in a ditch and remains there until someone picks him up to take him somewhere else. Due to this lapse of consciousness, the jiva is unable to make its own decisions and acquire a new birth. Such people are said to obtain dark lokas.

During dhyana some people see light arising from within and feel as if the darkness of the night has vanished. In this spiritual light, the sadhaka takes his consciousness forward. In dhyana, a stage of deep darkness may also come, where one loses consciousness. There is a feeling of illusion, rather than awareness of oneself. At this point, the darkness of *chidakasha* becomes so dense that one is unaware of the luminous centre of consciousness.

Thus, in the path of meditation, the sadhaka passes through two different paths – one of *agni*, fire or light and the other of smoke or darkness. The consciousness of the sadhaka progressing on the path of light ascends, and that of the traveller on the smoky path remains stuck. The main reason for this is the vasana of the jiva. If the sadhaka has not emptied his bundle of vasanas, desires and samskaras, and purified his instinctive mind and chitta, these factors combine to create a curtain of darkness during the state of dhyana. Thus the sadhaka, who pursues only the path of meditation, without exhausting his karma, attains laya and darkness. This has been said by the scriptures and has been ratified by experience.

When a sadhaka who is bogged down by karmas and samskaras sits for meditation, he forgets everything for

some time and loses consciousness. In comparison, when the sadhaka whose karmas and samskaras have been purified sits for dhyana, he becomes introverted, but he remains conscious throughout. During meditation he experiences the light and his consciousness goes even deeper into that light. So, elimination of karma is essential in order to progress in sadhana. However, karma or avidya is not eliminated through inaction. Actions purify the *chitta*, the individual consciousness, especially when performed with awareness and dedication. Those who reduce the role of karma to earning money do not give it proper importance. Nowhere on the spiritual path has karma been criticized or denounced, rather, it has been advised that one combine karma with jnana.

Samskaras are produced by karma which is not the case with jnana. Samskaras produce *prarabdha karma*, predetermined karmas or the force of destiny, and prarabdha leads to rebirth. Thus the cycle of birth and death continues. The path of karma combined with jnana does not generate samskara. On the other hand, the path of karma to the exclusion of jnana leads to one-sided development and it is not possible to achieve the desired spiritual goal in this manner. Those who perform karma only bind themselves to the outcome of their actions and face many obstacles during dhyana. However, those who pursue the path of jnana to the exclusion of karma attain deeper darkness. The elimination of samskaras and vasanas that happens in the karma marga is not possible in jnana marga. Although it is true that as the old samskaras and vasanas are destroyed in karma marga, new ones are simultaneously generated, however, karma is still necessary because there is no other way to eliminate the old, accumulated samskaras.

Some people adopt jnana marga without first destroying their karmas and samskaras. Others consider karma to be highest and have as their motto: 'Work is worship'. However, a combination of karma and jnana should be applied in life at all levels; otherwise, neither purpose is served. Despite

knowing the best meditation techniques and having the most competent guru, one will not experience the light during dhyana. As the sadhaka progresses towards the subtle dimension, he begins to feel the burden of the load he carries within himself. This pressure becomes so intolerable that he panics and returns to normal awareness. Such a pressure exists in the mind and consciousness at the gross level as well and creates mental imbalance. This is the reason why sadhakas are advised to do sadhana near the guru.

The sadhaka will have to destroy his age-old karmas, diminish the prarabdha and undergo the sufferings slated for him due to his karmas. The path of karma destroys the old samskaras and also generates new. Jnana cannot destroy the old samskaras, but it can prevent the generation of new ones.

Those who try to know the Atman only through the study of scriptures can never progress on this path. The biggest fault is their belief that they have understood *satya*, or the eternal truth, and nothing further remains to be known. This erroneous assumption gives rise to *ahamkara*, ego, in their mind and their downfall begins from this point. This error is avoided by applying jnana internally as a form of self-study and analysis. During meditation the samskaras arise and the sadhaka observes them within himself in different forms. This is called darshan.

These visions during meditation are like the experience of dreams in the waking state. Even these visions are obstacles in the path of dhyana and are classified as avidya or ignorance. In the process of dhyana, even these have to be removed. Many people see light during dhyana, but this is merely background luminosity and the spiritual domain is still very far. Some sadhakas see this light throughout their lives and consider this to be the real experience. The truth is that during dhyana, there should be neither darkness nor a centre of light nor any scene. Rather, the entire *chidakasha*, the space behind the closed eyes, should be illuminated. In this mantra the balance of karma and jnana, action and knowledge, is advocated to achieve this exalted state.

Mantra 10: Walking Two Paths

अन्यदेवाहुर्विद्ययाऽन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥ 10 ॥

nyadevaahurvidyayaanyadaahuravidyaya;
Iti shushruma dheeraanaam ye nastadvichachakshire.

Anvay

Vidyayaa: of knowledge; *Anyat eva:* different fruit; *Aahuh:* they say; *Avidyayaa:* of ignorance; *Anyat:* different fruit; *Aahuh:* they say; *Iti:* thus; *Dheeraanaam:* from the wise; *Shushruma:* we have heard; *Ye:* who; *Nah:* to us; *Tat:* that subject; *Vichachakshire:* have expounded.

Translation

The result of vidya, they say, is distinct and so is the result of avidya. Thus, we have heard from the wise, who have expounded this subject to us.

Commentary

In sadhana, the path of vidya leads to one kind of perception and the path of karma to another. This has been explicitly stated by the wise who have arrived at this conclusion by their own experience. When sadhakas of the karma marga, burdened with a load of samskaras, sit for dhyana, they have strange experiences. Some see a form or a point of light, others hear sounds or voices. The different experiences are not due to a difference in sadhana. The quality of experience depends on the capacity of the sadhaka. It is an indication of the samskaras that influence him and the motive behind his meditation. The sadhaka who is busy working all day will see many scenes in meditation. His experiences may sometimes be so bizarre that they just cannot be imagined in the external world. Such sadhakas do not reach the state of *laya*, dissolution, but they dream continuously. While they see

visions internally, they are by no means unaware externally. Simultaneously, they hear external sounds and remain aware of the happenings around them.

Those who have renounced everything and abstain from all kinds of karma, either for themselves or for others, and who have dispensed with the responsibilities and problems of life, do not feel any stress. When such people sit in dhyana, they become oblivious of themselves and reach the stage of laya. This state is as dark as *amavasya*, the night of no moon. They are so oblivious of everything during dhyana that they will not notice even if a train passes by. Such sadhakas may sometimes remain in dhyana continuously for six months, but they are unable to perceive anything. This happens due to an absolute absence of samskara, *prarabdha* or accumulated karma, restlessness of the mind and mental tension in their lives. Therefore, they make very little progress in dhyana, as it is essential to be pulled from both sides for meditation to be effective.

The Atman must be restless to go within and the indriyas must be struggling to peep outside. An intermediate, balanced state must eventually be reached in which the awareness is neither fully introverted nor fully extroverted. In a futile attempt to attain this state, many sadhus practise dhyana twenty-four hours a day, for years on end, and yet do not progress. A person who lives in complete renunciation, free of all worries in life, introverts very quickly when he sits in dhyana. This feeling is akin to jumping directly into the sea without a lifeline. The mind escapes his control and eludes him completely. When the awareness slips, in such haste, the mind is left outside to vanish, like floating vapour.

After going inside in this manner, one has the feeling of passing through a dark tunnel. If one desires to concentrate upon his *ishta*, his personal deity, in dhyana, even that becomes impossible because his *ishta* is also left outside when the awareness goes in. It is necessary for the sadhaka to gradually bring his mind under control first, and then

go in with constant awareness of his ishta. Some people think that if they had enough wealth they would be free to practise eternal sadhana, sitting peacefully in a cottage in the Himalayas, free from all anxiety. They want total freedom from all worries and anxieties to the extent that they should not even need to think about their food. The truth is that even if they are able to obtain this situation, spiritual progress is not possible.

The initial stage of meditation is neither freedom from anxiety nor isolation. On the one hand, while going through the path of jnana there is the feeling of passing through a dark tunnel, and on the other hand, the path of karma is like walking through different sceneries of flowers and trees. So many vivid vistas appear on the path of karma that the sadhaka returns after seeing them without proceeding any further. The situation is similar to that of a man who leaves his house to take a bath in the Ganga, but stops on the way to watch some entertaining games and comes back without having had a bath.

Therefore in sadhana, one path leads to internal visions known as *samskara darshan*, the viewing of samskaras, and the other is of laya or dissolution, where there is no *jagriti*, waking, *swapna*, dream, or *sushupti*, deep sleep, but only darkness and ignorance. Thus, if the path of vidya is that of laya and the path of avidya of *vikalpa* or alternatives, how can one rid oneself of both these *vikshepas*, distractions? How can one practise meditation and proceed directly towards the Atman? The body has its limitations and so does the mind. In such a situation, karma and jnana will have to be combined. One should remain oblivious to the noise of the external world, but be aware within. One may remain unconscious to the outside, but one must see the scenes within. Inner consciousness should be maintained constantly. However, this state is difficult to attain by a *sannyasin* or renunciate, or by a *grihastha*, householder. Only the *jivanmukta*, one who is emancipated while still living, can maintain this fine balance with ease.

Mantra 11: From Death to Immortality

विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।
अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ 11 ॥

*Vidyāam chaavidyāam cha yastadvedobhayam saha;
Avidyayāa mrityum teertvāa vidyayāamritamashnute.*

Anvay

Yah: he who; *Tat ubhayam:* both of them; *Vidyāam:* knowledge; *Cha:* and; *Avidyāam:* ignorance; *Cha saha:* simultaneously; *Veda:* knows (he); *Avidyayāa:* through ignorance; *Mrityum:* death; *Teertvāa:* having crossed; *Vidyayāa:* by knowledge; *Amritam:* immortality; *Ashnute:* attains.

Translation

He who knows both vidya and avidya together crosses death through avidya and attains eternal life through vidya.

Commentary

The sadhaka who strives for vidya and avidya or dhyana and karma together in life prevents death through the karma element and achieves the imperishable Atman through the dhyana aspect. The meaning of avidya and vidya varies in different Upanishads. Generally, *avidya* stands for absence of knowledge and *vidya* for knowledge. In the context of this Upanishad, vidya stands for knowledge pertaining to the Supreme and avidya for knowledge pertaining to the material world. The following mantra in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (5:1) clarifies the difference between vidya and avidya:

*Ksharam tvavidya hyamritam tu vidya
Vidyavidye eeshate yastu soanyah.*

Knowledge of the perishable is avidya. Knowledge of the imperishable Supreme is vidya.

He who controls both vidya and avidya is another separate entity.

Normally people use the word 'mrityu' for the death of the physical body. Death is the state where the consciousness leaves the gross physical body. However, in spiritual literature another state has been termed as *mrityu* or death. In the *Bible*, Saint John has said, "I die every day." This does not refer to the death of the physical body, but to the state of dhyana, in which the awareness is withdrawn and no longer perceives the outer world, but watches the samskaras unfolding from within. That experience is different to seeing the world with the physical eyes.

The sadhaka who only does karma has a unique experience in dhyana. He sees different scenes while wandering through the different lokas and then comes back again. Several Puranas describe how the consciousness visits the different lokas such as Brahma loka, Deva loka, Vaikuntha, and so on, after death. This journey also depicts the state of dhyana, when the consciousness of the sadhaka goes inside and views the impressions hidden within. When the state of dhyana is broken, the consciousness returns to the external plane. In this way, the practitioner of karma marga experiences the different inner planes and reaches, at most, up to *Deva loka*, the plane of the gods.

Thus, in regard to vidya and avidya, the spiritual sadhaka is faced with a major dilemma. By traversing the path of vidya, he reaches the state of laya or dissolution, and pursuing the path of karma, he encounters the visions of samskaras. The sadhaka who pursues either of these two paths exclusively can never have the experience of the Atman. The scriptures offer several solutions to this problem. The *Bhagavad Gita* has advised the sadhaka to proceed in spiritual life by simultaneously incorporating karma and jnana, but this path is extremely difficult, and most people prefer renunciation to karma. Renunciation of karma is a natural inclination, because the innate tendency of the

unconscious mind is to avoid work. One desires to finish off one's work as quickly as possible; one wants to be relieved quickly of one's responsibilities.

True renunciation of karma, as opposed to escapism, is possible only through *viveka*, or discrimination. Some people make advance plans, not only for this life but even for the next, to renounce karma for dhyana. The truth is that complete renunciation of karma is not possible. Perfect renunciation is similarly not possible. Also, renunciation of karma cannot lead to the attainment of dhyana. Therefore, the Upanishad does not emphasize the renunciation of karma, but the reaction of the samskaras that are produced by karma. The *Bhagavad Gita* has termed this as *anasakta karma*, action done without attachment to the reactions caused. No matter what karma one may do, it should not affect one's mental equilibrium. One must go through the conflicting experiences of life, like pleasure and pain, birth and death, prosperity and calamity, without being affected or disturbed. When this concept of renunciation is realized, renunciation is born.

Renunciation does not arise by abandonment of karma, but through the dawn of viveka, discrimination. If karma is given up before viveka arises, that karma is transformed into *prarabdha* or destiny, and accompanies the person in future lives. The samskaras are only destroyed by being experienced through the pleasures and pains of life or by elimination through viveka. If the samskaras are suppressed without being expressed through karma or eliminated through viveka, they rebound with double intensity at some later time. They may appear as physical or mental imbalances, and many diseases in life are the result of these imbalances. Thus, the direct method of eliminating the samskaras is through viveka. Jnana and karma cannot be practised simultaneously without discrimination.

Viveka is the ability to discriminate between real and unreal, permanent and impermanent, atma and anatma. This ability can be acquired through practice. An example of

a practice to develop discrimination is this: at night before going to sleep, spend some time introspecting on all the activities, work and interactions of the day, whether good or bad. Immerse yourself in this process, and if time permits, jot down a list of activities in a diary. After a few months, when the previous list loses its relevance, read it again, this time with the attitude of a witness, *sakshi bhava*. Doing so will automatically reveal the true significance or insignificance of those events, thus resulting in the dawn of viveka.

The sadhaka who pursues the state of dhyana to the exclusion of karma encounters *laya*, dissolution, and *vikshepa*, distraction. In order to remove both of these obstacles, jnana and karma should be incorporated with discrimination in life. By doing so, one has the experience of the Atman in meditation. There are several views regarding what should be the object of meditation. The word 'dhyana' means attention. Thinking and reflecting about a person or incident may be called dhyana. In English, the word 'dhyana' is generally translated as meditation, but that is incorrect; the proper word is 'awareness'.

Some people consider *sakara upasana*, worship of form, to be the best method for attaining dhyana; others prefer *nirakara upasana*, worship of the formless. Some consider idol worship to be ideal for meditation and others are against it. However, the aspirant has to incorporate both of these approaches together to succeed on the path of dhyana.

Mantra 12: Worship of Sakara and Nirakara

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽसंभूतिमुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ संभूत्या रताः ॥ 12॥

*Andham tamah pravishanti ye asambhootimupaasate;
Tato bhooya iva te tamo ya u sambhootyaam rataah.*

Anvay

Ye: those people who; *Asambhootim*: unmanifest; *Upaasate*: worship (they); *Andham tamah*: into blinding darkness; *Pravishanti*: enter (and); *Ye*: those who; *Sambhootyaam*: in the manifest; *Rataah*: take delight; *Te*: they; *U*: however; *Bhooyah iva*: greater; *Tatah*: than them; *Tamah*: darkness they enter.

Translation

Those who worship the unmanifest (in the state of dhyana) enter into blinding darkness. However, those who take delight in the manifest enter into still greater darkness.

Commentary

Those sadhakas who worship *asambhooti* or the unmanifest reach dark dimensions in the state of dhyana, and those who follow the path of *sambhooti* or the manifest experience even greater darkness in the manifest world. In this mantra two important words, ‘asambhooti’ and ‘sambhooti’ have been used. The visible world that we perceive through our indriyas, and which we can limit and define through the boundaries of name, form and object, is known as *sambhooti*. We can also call it *virat*. *Sambhooti* is also known as *vyakta* or manifest; *sakara*, with form; *sopadhika*, having attributes; *indriyagochara*, perceptible by the indriyas; *moorta*, embodied; *savishesha* or possessing characteristics; and *asat* or unreal.

The unmanifest is beyond the limitations of name, form and object, and is known as *asambhooti* or *avyakta*,

unmanifest; *nirakara*, formless; *indriyatita*, beyond perception; *nirvishesha*, without characteristics; *amoorta*, incorporeal; and *sat*, absolute truth. The meaning of asambhooti here is nirakara Brahman and that of sambhooti is sakara Brahman. These are the two identities of Paramatman. One is perceivable through the mind and indriyas while the other is not. When dhyana is performed on that Brahman which is not perceivable through the indriyas and the mind, it is called *nirakara dhyana*, or formless meditation. Dhyana done on that Brahman which is perceivable through the indriyas and the mind is called *sakara dhyana*, meditation on form. In this way, sakara is sambhooti and nirakara is asambhooti.

Those who concentrate on nirakara achieve *laya* or dissolution in the state of dhyana. When a jnani, tyagi, sannyasi or sadhaka sits in dhyana, his mind sinks within all of a sudden, just like a stone that has been dropped into a well. This happens when a sadhaka has no strain or worry in the mind. In such a state of *laya*, the sadhaka is completely unaware of both internal and external conditions. Although his pranas, blood circulation and body functions are normal, he is completely unconscious, like a dead man. He has no awareness of time. If he is later asked how he felt, he will answer that he had no awareness of how the time passed. Only a great yogi, whose mind has become free from all distractions, can maintain awareness during nirakara sadhana.

The mind is the main focus in meditation, but the natural tendency of the mind is to go towards the gross. So, the mind needs proper training if it is to be taken through the path of nirakara. In the course of sadhana, the point on which the mind is fixed is known as the *lakshya*, the focus or aim. These are of three kinds, according to the capability of the sadhaka: *sthoola* or gross, *madhyama* or medium, and *sukshma* or subtle. The sthoola lakshya can be perceived externally through the gross indriyas, such as a candle flame, symbol, image or picture of the guru, deities or sages. This lakshya is appropriate for most sadhakas.

The madhyama lakshya is perceivable by thought, but not by the senses. This includes the practice of japa, visualization of chakras, deities, fire flame, or point of light at a chakra, and hearing inner sounds with the ears shut. The sukshma lakshya entails reflection on thoughts which relate to higher consciousness, such as: *Aham Brahmasmi* – “I am Brahman.” The truth is established through the process of *anvaya vyatireka*, agreement and difference, but this method is not suitable for everyone. If the mind and thought process of the sadhaka are not purified, this form of sadhana may result in some form of regression. In the famous tale of Indra and Virochana, the reflection on only one sutra or aphorism led Indra to the realization of the Atman, whereas it led the demon king Virochana to degeneration.

Therefore, the sadhaka should practise sthoola sadhana in the initial phase. On the path of meditation, sometimes certain symbols or images, which have no relevance to logic, are recommended for concentration. For example, idol worship has been opposed for ages, but in practice, the saints and sages have praised it. The mind needs a focus in order to become steady, and this is why the idol or murti is used. The appearance of the divine form internally is possible only through concentration on the external image. If you concentrate on an image of Shiva outside of you, only then will it be possible for your inner consciousness to take on the form of Shiva.

However, in this Upanishad those sadhakas who disregard sthoola sadhana and leap directly into reflection on Brahman are cautioned that they will not see the light. The sadhaka should introspect from time to time during the process of sadhana. If he experiences increasing darkness during meditation, he should understand that he is not progressing in dhyana. The sadhaka who has the experience of light in meditation should also introspect and question whether he sees only light or also an image along with it. If he does not see any image, he should realize that he is not progressing in his sadhana.

In the process of sadhana, when the sadhaka sits with the eyes closed to practise dhyana on some form, light should also appear as soon as the form appears. In this way, the entire chidakasha gradually becomes radiant. However, often what happens is that as soon as the form begins to appear, many sadhakas lose awareness and fall asleep with closed eyes, only to wake up and announce that they had a very good meditation. In order to caution such people, the Upanishad states: *Andham tamah pravishanti* – “Into blinding darkness they enter.”

People constantly dispute the superiority of sakara or nirakara, but very few understand that sadhana has nothing to do with this discussion. Both sakara and nirakara are simply ladders to reach the different lakshya, and every sadhaka has to go through them. The first step on this path is *bhakti* or devotion, and then comes the external sadhanas like *pooja*, ritual worship, *trataka*, steady gazing, and so on. Next is *antaranga* or internal sadhana, and the last is nirakara sadhana. Antaranga sadhana is also of two types: *manasa pooja*, or mental worship, and *swarupa smriti*, or remembrance of one’s own essential nature.

While performing manasa pooja, the sadhaka closes his eyes and uses his power of imagination to perform all the rituals, exactly in the same manner as was done before the gross idol. In this way he has *darshan*, or inner vision of the deity, while mentally offering flowers, incense and *deepak* or oil lamp. The mantras are also repeated mentally, rather than verbally. Whatever is done during manasa pooja is all within the mind and constant remembrance is maintained. The sadhaka performing manasa pooja divides his awareness into two parts: one with which he performs the pooja, and the other with which he observes all the mental activities, as a *drashta* or witness.

Sometimes this pooja becomes so alive that the practitioner is not sure whether he performed the *arati*, waving the lights before the image, or the *stuti*, eulogizing of the deity. However, for manasik or mental pooja to bear fruit,

the mind requires proper training and prior practice. After performing the external pooja for many months or even years, with complete devotion, its effect begins to show on the mental screen. At that time it should be understood that the foundation has been laid for manasa pooja, and it can gradually be started. While performing the mental pooja, if the sadhaka becomes so engrossed that he continues to perform only one item of the pooja to the exclusion of the others, it should be understood that this stage of sadhana has reached its termination.

Next, he should take up *swarupa smriti*, which does not entail any process such as pooja. The sadhaka simply remembers and recalls the form or image of his deity until the vision becomes as clear as being face to face with the deity. This method is superior to manasa pooja. In this, the *chetana* or awareness of the sadhaka introverts and takes the form of the deity. The sadhaka becomes so engrossed that he loses all sense of the outer atmosphere. Only after achieving this state should one proceed towards nirakara sadhana. However, if the body and mind have not been properly purified, and restlessness and distractions are still present, the path of nirakara should not be adopted. In this case, the sadhaka should continue with the sakara sadhana.

Mantra 13: Results of Sakara and Nirakara

अन्यदेवाहुः संभवादन्यदाहुरसंभवात् ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥ 13॥

*Anyadevaahuh sambhavaadanyadaahurasambhavaat;
Iti shushruma dheeraanaam ye nastadvichachakshire.*

Anvay

Sambhavaat: from the manifest; *Anyat eva*: another type of fruit; *Aahuh*: is told (and); *Asambhavaat*: from the unmanifest; *Anyat*: another type of fruit; *Aahuh*: is told (they say); *Iti*: like this; *Dheeraanaam*: from the wise; *Shushruma*: has been heard; *Ye*: who; *Nah*: to us; *Tat*: that; *Vichachakshire*: have expounded.

Translation

From (worship) of the manifest, one type of result is told, and from the unmanifest another type of result is told. Thus have we heard from the wise, who have expounded that (knowledge) to us.

Commentary

The Upanishad states that we have heard the words of the wise who explained to us that by worshipping the imperishable *nirakara* Brahman, one type of fruit is obtained, and by worshipping the *sakara*, another type of fruit is obtained. To allay the feelings of different religious adherents, it is often said that in the end, each one achieves the same realization, however, this is not so. Careful observation will reveal that the *chitta vrittis*, mental patterns, of sadhakas performing sakara and nirakara meditation are different, which means that they obtain different paths.

Through sakara upasana, concentration is gradually obtained, whereby the sadhaka is able to remain aware internally and externally. By nirakara upasana, the sadhaka enters the state of laya, where he delves into the ocean of endless wisdom, but returns empty-handed, as his awareness

vanishes inside. Therefore, both paths have distinct results. The path of nirakara will give positive results only if the mind remains steady and unaffected by desires and distractions. If the mind is unsteady, nirakara meditation will lead to agitation. Such a sadhaka will attain peace only on the path of sakara. For this reason, despite intellectual attacks, the path of sakara upasana has continued to remain in practice by householders and saints alike throughout the ages.

The Vedas have criticized the sakara path by asking, “To which god should we offer our oblations?” The *Rig Veda* says that Truth is one, but the wise call it by many names. Some call it Indra, others Varuna and some Matarishvan. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* also makes a similar mention when Sage Yajnavalkya states that Brahman, which is the *Paramatman* or Supreme Atma of the world, has two forms, one murta and the other amurta. The form that is perceivable by the senses is *murta*, and the formless that is beyond the perception of the senses is *amurta*.

The great sage Kapila who expounded the Samkhya philosophy opposed sakara upasana. Later, the Jains opposed the concept of sakara, and the Buddhists followed suit. The interesting fact is that those traditions which were opposed to idol worship continued to practise it themselves by changing the forms of the idols and introducing new forms. Opposition to one idol was followed by installation of another in one form or another. Down through the ages, the jnanis and seekers of Brahman, the unmanifest consciousness, looked down upon idol worship. Then came a time when the ultimate exponent of the Upanishads, Adiguru Shankaracharya himself, emphasized the need for installation and worship of deities.

The saints and renunciates who practise formless meditation and self-restraint can progress through the nirakara sadhana. However, for ordinary people who are engrossed in karma twenty-four hours a day and are devoted to the acquisition of wealth, there is no means to progress on

the spiritual path other than sakara sadhana. The destinies of people following the sakara and nirakara systems are different. One is *shukla* or light, which relates with *uttarayana*, the summer solstice, and the other is *krishna* or dark, which relates with *dakshinayana*, the winter solstice.

The followers of the sakara marga have shukla destiny, as they receive light, and those who follow the nirakara marga have krishna destiny, as they face darkness. When the path is enveloped in darkness, one easily becomes lost. Therefore, the followers of nirakara marga are often required to undertake the journey again from the very beginning. The sakara marga also requires caution, because this path is extremely short, and there is a risk that the sadhaka may wander in these circuitous lanes all through life. Sometimes the sakara upasaka wants to leave the idol or symbol and enter the unmanifest, but he is unable to, and continues holding on to it lifelong.

The sakara sadhaka should not become attached to the idol or symbol, which is only the means of attainment by helping to focus and concentrate the mind. Where is the external idol when the mind becomes concentrated and the image becomes clear within? When the mind becomes introverted, the physical idol is left outside! What is its importance then? The answer lies in discrimination. During idol worship, you see the idol externally through your gross senses. That is called *bahiranga murti pooja*. When the same image appears with clarity within and forms the base of your sadhana, it is called *antaranga murti pooja*.

Thus, there are two forms of the *murti* or idol. One is made of gross material, such as stone, wood or metal, and the other is a manifestation of the chitta vrittis, the patterns of the mind. Our chitta vrittis assume a form within us on the basis of our imagination. That is why we have two forms of sakara upasana, one is the external form received by the senses, and the other is the internal form of the vrittis or patterns of consciousness. The internal form needs some support to arise, and that support is derived

from the external form. Once the inner aspect takes off, all attachment for the outer form should be dropped, otherwise the inner form will not develop. The internal pooja should be performed by the sadhaka as if it were a real external pooja. The stronger the power of imagination, the more successful the practice will be.

At the time of internal pooja, the sadhaka should consider his body as the temple of God, and the internal image, residing in the body, as the eternal God, who is being worshipped with the feeling that, 'I am He.' It is only after perfecting the internal sakara upasana to this level that the nirakara meditation can be entered. If the sadhaka wishing to pursue the path of nirakara is unable to sit steadily in one asana for two to three hours, he should be secretly thankful that he has escaped the risk of *laya* or absorption into the unconscious, and has time for further improvement.

The scriptures say that, irrespective of how expert a sadhaka may be, the nirakara sadhana should be done only by the *adhikari*, one who possesses authorized qualification. The first requisite of the nirakara sadhaka is to have a balanced view of life. Although he may see the entire world as a form of the Supreme Brahman, his attitude towards life should not become dry and disinterested. His heart should overflow with the feelings of love, compassion and mercy for all beings. He should feel an obligation to serve and uplift humanity in any way available to him.

Mantra 14: Unmanifest and Manifest

संभूतिं च विनाशं च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।
विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा संभूत्याऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ 14॥

*Sambhootim cha vinaasham cha yastadvedobhayam saha;
Vinaashena mrityum teertvaa sambhootyaamritamashnute.*

Anvay

Yah: he who; *Tat ubhayam*: both; *Sambhootim*: unmanifest nature; *Cha*: and; *Vinaasham cha*: manifest nature or; *Saha*: together; *Veda*: knows (he); *Vinaashena*: through the destructible; *Mrityum*: to death; *Teertvaa*: after overcoming; *Sambhootyaa*: through the unmanifest nature; *Amritam*: eternal life; *Ashnute*: obtains.

Translation

He who knows both the unmanifest nature and the manifest nature together, overcomes death through the manifest nature and obtains eternal life through the unmanifest.

Commentary

In this Upanishad, there are two triads of mantras having almost the same words except for one set of dominant words. In the first triad, comprising mantras 9 to 11, the key words are *vidya* and *avidya*, which actually stand for *dhyana* and *karma* respectively. In those three mantras it was established that neither *dhyana* nor *karma* alone is sufficient for one's spiritual upliftment. Both are necessary and should be practised simultaneously as directed by the guru.

In the second triad of mantras from 12 to 14, the sets of words are: *sambhooti/asambhooti*, *sambhava/asambhava*, *sambhooti/vinasha*. These terms have been used to represent *sakara* and *nirakara*, while the rest of the words and even their sequence remain exactly the same. The second triad maintains that meditation on either the *sakara* or *nirakara* aspect alone will not lead one to the goal, whereas one who

can shift from sakara to nirakara upasana is able to attain the highest spiritual aim.

The *Ishavasya Upanishad* has come down to us in two different recensions: one belonging to Sage Kanva and the other to the Madhyandinas, who were followers of a branch of the *shukla* or white *Yajur Veda*. In the earlier recension, the Upanishad contains 18 mantras, while the latter contains only 14 mantras. It is also said that there is a difference in the sequence of the mantras in the two recensions. In Kanva, the mantras 9 to 11 and 12 to 14 occupy the same position as given here, while in the Madhyandina recension, the order is reversed.

The term *sambhooti* here refers to the unmanifest prakriti, which is the substratum for all manifest existence. *Vinasha* means destructible and refers to the manifest nature, which is perishable. Death is overcome by nirakara upasana, worship of the unmanifest, because through this path one attains absorption or *laya*, and becomes *prakritilaya*, one who is submerged in the unmanifest. According to the scriptures, this is the highest attainment within the body. At the same time, eternal life is obtained through sakara upasana, worship of the manifest or personal form of God. All the limitations of life are overcome by meditation on form, even the fear of death. Everything that exists is subject to death, but death is not the end. The sakara sadhaka realizes death to be merely a change of form, and thus becomes immortal.

Thus the yogi who performs karma enjoined by the scriptures, and devotes himself to the pursuit of Brahman through the path of sakara and nirakara together, overcomes death and obtains immortality. As in mantra 11, it is said here that the yogi or sadhaka who does dhyana on sakara and nirakara Brahman together transcends even the state of awareness and realizes the eternal, supreme consciousness. He realizes the need for a symbol on which to base his meditation, and also the need to drop the symbol at the appropriate time. The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali mention

that in order to introvert the consciousness and overcome the obstacles on the path of meditation, one must have a form for the consciousness to dwell upon. This form helps to dissociate the awareness from the objects of the world. However, the form is ultimately dropped when the formless manifests.

The practice of meditation has two distinct stages, sakara and nirakara. Sakara is the means and nirakara is the end. Meditation on a material object is sakara and the realization of Brahman through awareness of the unmanifest is nirakara. This mantra points out the importance of using both methods together. The limitation of dhyana on a sakara, personal god, is psychic darkness. The limitation of dhyana on the impersonal nirakara is yet more darkness. Therefore, in order to attain the realization of Brahman, one has to first understand that the impersonal nirakara Brahman and the personal sakara Brahman are indeed one and then take the most effective path.

Mantra 15: Golden Lid

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥ 15 ॥

*Hiranmayena paatrena satyasyaapihitam mukham;
Tattvam pooshannapaavrinu satyadharmaya drishtaye.*

Anvay

Pooshan: Oh Sun, nourisher or sustainer of life; *Satyasya mukham*: face of Truth; *Hiranmayena paatrena*: by a golden disc or lid; *Apihitam*: is covered; *Satya dharmaya*: seeker of truth; *Drishtaye*: for the sight of; *Tat*: that lid; *Tvam apaavrinu*: remove, open.

Translation

A golden disc covers the face of Truth. Oh Sun, remove that lid for the sight of this seeker of Truth.

Commentary

Normally, we are unable to perceive the light within our consciousness. There is continuous turmoil within the mind due to the perception of the indriyas. The senses are so entangled in the sensory objects that they cannot hear the melody of the Atman. When we withdraw the awareness from the external world and establish it in the centre of our consciousness, only then do we perceive the Atman. The individual consciousness constantly perceives the Atman as well as the sensory objects. However, those of us who are bound by *avidya* or ignorance perceive the sensory objects, and those who are free from ignorance can perceive the Atma. Thus, the individual awareness is of two types: one is bound and the other is free.

In this mantra, the word ‘hiranmaya’ represents the hiranyagarbha of the Vedas. The powers of knowledge, will, perception and thought relate to the patterns of the mind.

The sum total of all these powers is called *hiranyagarbha*. The individual mind is one aspect of consciousness and the universal mind is another. When we think about personal or family welfare, a chain of thoughts arises in the mind. This is one dimension of mind and awareness; similarly, there is a second and a third dimension. Vedanta describes three fields of consciousness: the first is *sthoola* or gross, the second is *sukshma* or subtle, and the third is *karana* or causal. The sum of these three is called *hiranyagarbha*.

Our perception of the Atma is veiled not only by our daily thoughts of hearth and home, but also by those thoughts that we have suppressed and are therefore unable to surface within our mental plane. Along with these suppressed thoughts are invisible thoughts called *adrishya*, those thoughts that have never consciously appeared in our minds. On other levels, there exist still deeper currents of thought. The aggregate of all these thoughts which are flowing on different planes is called *hiranyagarbha*. The three words, ‘*manas*’, ‘*antahkarana*’ and ‘*hiranyagarbha*’ are often used in the scriptures.

The word *antahkarana* means ‘internal instrument’ and refers to the gross levels of consciousness. The *antahkarana* is comprised of four aspects: i) *manas*, which is capable of thinking, ii) *buddhi*, which is capable of discrimination and judgement, iii) *chitta*, which is a storehouse of memories and impressions, and iv) *ahamkara*, which gives the idea of individual identity. The *ahamkara* has been defined as: *Aham asmi iti bhavam karayet*, meaning that it induces the feeling, ‘I am’. The *ahamkara* resides in the *antahkarana* to maintain the individual existence. In its absence, the personality will cease to exist. The individual constantly reiterates through the unconscious mind that, ‘I am’. Therefore, all thought processes come within the purview of mental consciousness.

Apart from this there is another dimension called the *sukshma sharira*, or subtle body, which only the rishis or seers have perceived. Beyond this there exists the unconscious

dimension, called the *karana sharira* or causal body in Vedanta. The sum total of these dimensions of consciousness has been designated as *chitta* or the individual consciousness by Sage Patanjali, and as *hiranyagarbha* by the Vedas. We call it the total mind.

Apart from the gross thoughts that arise in the mind, there are some thoughts that we are not even aware of. Such thoughts appear either in dreams or in meditation. However, there are some thoughts other than these that do not appear either in dreams or in meditation, but in the form of ailments. Even beyond these, there are thoughts that the mind does not permit to surface in any way, because these thoughts could perhaps destroy the entire personality. Such thoughts remain suppressed deep within, but they influence the mind and perception unconsciously and become the cause of irrational or inappropriate reactions and behaviour, for example, some people shake their legs compulsively, pluck their beard or twist their moustache. Behind such acts some light or deep thought is at work.

In the stream of thoughts, those presently arising in the mind are the most difficult to comprehend. Modern psychology has researched this, but nothing conclusive has been found. It is easier to identify thoughts that have come to the mind two hours ago or a few days ago. The thoughts that arise at the moment are called the second line of thoughts, and they originate in *hiranyagarbha*. In the process of removing the lid that covers *hiranyagarbha*, all these layers of thought have to come out. You may adopt any technique, meditation, *antar mouna* or psychological analysis, but these thoughts will have to be seen, identified, and then released. This is the second level of consciousness, which is called the *sukshma sharira* or subtle body.

There is also a third level of consciousness called the *karana sharira* or causal body. The exact explanation of this dimension is not available even in the scriptures. It is believed *karana sharira* only registers what is of consequence

for the development of the spiritual personality. Thus, it is difficult to understand the Atma until the different layers of the mind have been properly understood. The reason for this is that the Atma is concealed under the golden lid of these very layers of the mind. In order to remove the lid, we will have to deal with these layers, one by one.

Just as the clouds sometimes cover the sun, in the same way, the golden lid covers the Truth within. This golden lid is the aggregate of consciousness. The texts of yoga and other scriptures have outlined the process of gradually removing this lid. Without opening the lid, the luminous form of the Atma cannot be seen, no matter how hard you try. An impenetrable wall exists between you and the Atma. If this barrier of the mind can be crossed, only then will it be possible to attain the goal. *Atmanubhava*, the experience of the Atma, and *Brahmanubhava*, the experience of Brahman, are not distant experiences. The requirement is simply to stop the external associations, and redirect the awareness inside.

In reality, most people do not even know where Ishwara or God resides. Nevertheless, they run around frantically searching for Him, with the result that they look in the wrong place. In the process of sadhana, the words used may be different, but the fact remains the same. *Shivaloka*, *Goloka*, *Vaikuntha*, *samadhi* and *nirvana* are all different names of the same goal. People meditate or worship in different ways in order to achieve this very goal. Some limit their sadhana to austerity and pilgrimage, but there are many paths. Those who do not know the way themselves often guide others willingly. If you enquire about the way to Kolkata, and someone tells you to go by car, will this guidance be adequate to reach Kolkata? For proper direction, a complete map along with detailed instructions is necessary.

The fact also remains that the goal is never far from you. If you try to see Ishwara, the Atma or the Truth somewhere other than within yourself, you will never be successful.

Moreover, if you believe that it exists within you, what is the need for any proof from others? The only requirement is to withdraw the awareness from the mental patterns for some time, and become aware of your own Self. However, experience has shown that when you try to go inside, the senses disturb the process. As you proceed further, the *samskaras*, mental impressions, create disturbance. Further than that, the state of laya or dissolution becomes a hindrance. Such is the nature of the mind, which is spoken of here as the golden lid or *hiranmaya patra*. This lid will have to be removed.

The element that can assist in removing this golden lid is already present within you, but it will have to be redirected. Saints have described this as: *Rasa gagana gufa men ajara jhare*, meaning “The immortal nectar ever trickles in the cave of chidakasha.” In yoga, the redirecting of this nectar is achieved through the practice of khechari mudra. The practice of khechari mudra is of two types: one of raja yoga and the other of hatha yoga. In the hatha yoga method, the length of the tongue is increased by gradually cutting the fraenum, situated near the root of the tongue. When the elongated tongue is turned backward and inserted into the opening of the throat, it touches *bhrumadhy*, which is the central point between the eyebrows from outside, and the vertex of the nasal passage from inside. In this way, the tongue may even be able to enter the skull cavity.

In the khechari mudra of raja yoga, the tongue is not cut, but simply folded back to touch the roof of the upper palate. After some time the tongue becomes elongated and gradually enters the throat cavity. When the tongue reaches the sinus cavity, the nectar is secreted, because that is where the *amrita granthi* or nectar gland is located, below the bindu chakra. In the scriptures this gland is described as a small island with a point in the centre on which is placed the *chintamani kalpataru*, the wish-fulfilling gem and tree, fenced in by trees.

The amrita granthi secretes nectar in very small quantities. In the ordinary person, this nectar falls down to manipura chakra where the sun burns it up. This phenomenon is described in the scriptural language as: "The amrita secreted by the moon is drunk by the sun." However, the yogis are different from ordinary mortals and they do not allow this precious nectar to be wasted. They purify it and redirect it upward to the source. The moment this purified nectar enters the physical system, the body is regenerated and becomes beautiful; it is pervaded by light. Thus, if this mantra were to be spoken from a yogic point of view, it would say: "O nourishing amrita! Dispel the darkness which has been created by the samskaras and ignorance of the mind." From the spiritual viewpoint, it is, "O nourisher, please remove the golden lid that covers the Truth."

The law of Truth is different from all other laws and religions. Truth is a religion in itself, but it is not a separate or exclusive religion. The Truth is eternal, for it is true in all the three times of past, present and future. Truth is different from the antahkarana, indriyas, samskaras, ignorance, and the three *gunas* or attributes of *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The *darshan*, vision or glimpse, of this satya, Truth or Atman, is like the tasting of jaggery by the dumb. The one who tastes it cannot express it. Similarly, the experience of the Atman is inexplicable, and has not been described up to today. The saints have simply said that one experiences a unique, indescribable joy or bliss that is beyond the realm of pleasure and pain. However, to reach that stage the soul has to pierce through seven veils, after which it attains the plane of satya where that state of bliss is experienced.

Through the worship of Gayatri, the deity of the Sun, the sadhaka aims to illumine these seven lokas or planes. The seven lokas are: *bhuh*, *bhuvah*, *swah*, *mahah*, *janah*, *tapah* and *satya*. The mind normally has access only up to *swah*, the heavenly plane; even the samskaras cannot go beyond that level. Satya loka is the domain of absolute Truth. The

lokas represent the seven planes of consciousness, and a veil exists on every plane. All these veils have to be pierced before reaching the plane of absolute experience. In the Gayatri mantra, the word 'dhiyah' has been used in plural with reference to these very planes, and the same *Pooshan*, or nourisher, is requested to illumine all the seven planes of consciousness.

The word 'pooshan' is used in the Vedas for the sun. But what is that sun? The sun is that heavenly body which we see as a burning fireball. The other sun is within us, that which we call the *surya nadi*. The *ida* and *pingala* nadis are also called *chandra* and *surya* nadis respectively. With the awakening of the *surya nadi*, human consciousness begins to attain enlightenment. The sun is considered to be the god of light. In the vedic tradition it has been called by various names, such as Savitri or Gayatri. Therefore, this mantra is an invocation of the Atma with the request to remove the golden lid of ignorance covering the face of Truth.

Mantra 16: Overwhelming Light

पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य व्यूहरश्मीन्समूह ।
तेजो यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि
योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥ 16 ॥

*Pooshannekarshe yama soorya prajaapatya vyooharashmeen
samooha;*

*Tejo yatte roopam kalyaanatamam tatte pashyaami yasaavasau
purushah sohamasmi.*

Anvay

Pooshan: Oh Nourisher; *Ekarshe:* Oh Sole Seer; *Yama:* Oh Ordainer of Truth; *Soorya:* Oh Illuminating Sun; *Praajaapatya:* Oh Offspring of Prajaapati; *Rashmeen:* rays; *Vyooha:* diffuse; *Tejah:* light; *Samooha:* gather; *Yat:* what; *Tè:* thy; *Kalyaanatamam:* most auspicious; *Roopam:* form; *Tat:* that; *Te:* thy; *Pashyaami:* I may behold; *Yah:* who; *Asau:* this; *Asau purushah:* this pure consciousness; *Sah:* He; *Aham asmi:* I am.

Translation

Oh Nourisher! Oh Sole Seer! Oh Ordainer of Truth! Oh Illuminating Sun! Oh Son of Prajapati! Diffuse your rays and gather up your light, that I may behold your most auspicious form. Who is this Purusha, this (pure consciousness within)? I am He.

Commentary

In this mantra the sadhaka wishes to perceive the Atma. He requests the Atma itself, calling it by the various names that represent its cosmic qualities: the nourisher, the seer, the illumined, and the favourite of the senses to diffuse its brilliant rays so that he may be able to see its auspicious form. He desires to realize his identity with the Atma that he is beholding, and to experience that there is no difference between the Atma and himself.

There are two main aspects on the spiritual path. One is the process or means of accomplishing the goal and the other is the goal to be accomplished. Many sadhakas make the mistake of considering the sadhana itself to be the goal. *Pooja* or ritual worship and *japa* or mantra sadhana are sadhanas, they are not the goal. There is only one goal, and that is *atmadarshan*, the perception of the Atma. When *atmadarshan* begins to manifest, all sadhanas come to an end by themselves. In this mantra, the sadhanas that were mentioned previously, including *vidya/avidya*, *sambhooti/asambhooti*, and *sambhooti/vinasha*, automatically end. Another type of sadhana begins thereafter.

All the sadhanas that are performed by the mind and senses, whether *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *raja yoga*, or even *jnana yoga*, are considered to be *bahiranga* or external. The scriptures say that *yama*, *niyama*, *asana* and *pranayama* are *bahiranga* sadhanas, while *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* are *antaranga* or internal sadhanas. In another scripture it is written that *apara bhakti* is *bahiranga* sadhana and *para bhakti* is *antaranga* sadhana. Similarly, *karma* is *bahiranga* and action performed with non-attachment is *antaranga*. *Satsang* is *bahiranga*, while *chintana* and *manana*, reflection, are *antaranga*. However, if viewed on the basis of the experience at a higher level of consciousness, all the above sadhanas mentioned are *bahiranga*.

All of these classifications are relative, for example: *yama*, *niyama*, *asana* and *pranayama* are *bahiranga* in comparison with *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. The sadhana performed with the senses is *bahiranga* in comparison to the sadhana performed by the mind, which is *antaranga*. Imagine that you are passing through a dark tunnel. The external light may help you for some distance, but as you go further into the tunnel, the darkness becomes denser. You are able to continue on because the road is straight, but at a certain point it feels like the road is blocked by a wall. There may be miles of road before you, but you do not know this on account of the blinding darkness, and it

may be impossible for you to advance further. This situation is identical to what happens on the path of meditation.

The word 'samadhi' sounds very simple, but this state is not easily accessible, even though it may be written in many books that, 'samadhi is the birthright of every human being'. It is possible to go up to the level of the subtle body or, even to some extent, into the causal body by yourself. You may pierce through one or two layers of consciousness, but as you proceed further in meditation, the consciousness becomes progressively fainter. A stage arrives where you become non-existent, and just sit like a statue. You do not know who you are and where you want to go. You cannot proceed further from this point until the guru comes to your aid. This is why the Atma element itself has been called upon in this mantra to help in *atmadarshan*. The rishi urges the very entity that he wants to see to come to his aid.

With this entreaty another important aspect comes to light. Even in this advanced spiritual state, the *sadhaka* still retains the perception of duality. If there had been no perception of duality, of the worshipper and the worshipped, the *sadhaka* would not have prayed to the Supreme Entity in this manner. Thus, the question arises regarding whose support should be taken to achieve the spiritual goal. Some are of the opinion that the guru is the sole support. According to others, God Himself is the support. Still others say that one should go on with the *sadhana* without any thought of support. Merely making someone the guru does not automatically generate the best support. However, in the state of meditation where the *sadhaka* loses his *jiva bhava*, the feeling of being alive, and his individual consciousness becomes non-existent, it is only the guru who can take him further.

When the awareness of the *sadhaka* enters the inner planes of consciousness, it gets stuck at one point. Then only the subtle form of the guru can take him further. The guru should have the power to remain in the subtle form, while also being in the gross form. Only a guru with a powerful

subtle form can take the sadhaka further in the subtle state. In the scriptures the word 'guru' has been used in two senses. One is the guru who dispels the darkness, and the other is the guru from whom we receive the mantra of initiation. Guru is he who guides us in our spiritual sadhana. There is an important chakra in the body known as *ajna chakra*, or the guru chakra. It is located behind the eyebrow centre, at the top of the spine, where ida, pingala and sushumna merge into one channel.

Ajna chakra has a unique quality: in the process of sadhana, as the external awareness of the sadhaka becomes inactive, this chakra becomes progressively and proportionately active. On the one side, the functions of the senses, manas, buddhi and chitta are withdrawn, and on the other side, the form of the *ishta devata*, or personal deity, becomes clearer and ajna chakra awakens simultaneously. As soon as the senses become extroverted, ajna chakra becomes dormant. The awakening of ajna chakra takes place during meditation only in those sadhakas whose senses are withdrawn and whose mind has become calm and detached to a considerable extent.

There are some sadhakas whose ajna chakra remains awake during meditation and even when not in meditation. However, such people are rare. In the state of deep meditation, when all the senses are withdrawn, ajna chakra receives the subtle instructions of the guru. Other than this, all the peepholes of perception are closed in this state. There is a membrane in between the gross and subtle states that acts as a soundproofing device. When you are in the gross state, you do not hear the subtle sounds, and when you cross over into the subtle state, you cannot hear the gross sounds. The experiences of one area do not have entry into the other area. The senses are capable of perceiving only specific vibrations within a particular range, even though sound waves of all frequencies exist constantly.

In deep meditation the instructions are not generated by thought, as thought is a product of the mind, which is

gross. The guru instructs the disciple through a subtle form of communication known as transmission. Only those gurus who are able to remain in the subtle state can convey subtle instructions. However, it is very difficult to remain for long periods in the subtle state, where no karma or activity can take place. Two swords cannot be placed in one sheath. All actions have to be abandoned, whether direct or indirect, in order to remain in this state. It is necessary to give up all worldly attachments, erase all impressions of pleasure and pain, rise above the pull of the senses, mind and intellect, and have no distinctions between the auspicious and inauspicious. This calibre of guru is seldom available.

When such a guru transmits instructions to his disciple during meditation, a counter vibration occurs in the disciple's ajna chakra that takes him further on the path of sadhana. The moment the arrow of the guru's instruction hits the disciple, he feels as if he has crossed over from a small dark room into a vast space. This space does not appear as a special world of memories and dreams; it is exactly like the gross world in appearance, with all the same perceptions. This internal world is identical to the external world with only one difference: the external world is perishable, whereas the internal world is eternal. After reaching the internal world, the external world appears to be false.

This experience is only possible when ajna chakra is unlocked and the commands of the guru are heard there. After this stage, the sadhaka does not do any other sadhana except obeying the words of the guru. Until this point, he undertakes different sadhanas to awaken ajna chakra, but beyond this point, only the transmission of the guru can take him further. On proceeding further, he perceives the light of the Atma and has the experience that he and the Atma are one and the same. There is no difference between the two. This is the phenomenon of *Jaanat tumahi tumahi hoi jaaee* – “On knowing you, I become you.” This is the goal of all yogas and sadhanas.

Mantra 17: Transcendence

वायुरनिलममृतमथेदं भस्मान्तं शरीरम् ।
ॐ क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर ॥ 17॥

*Vaayuranilamamritamathedam bhasmaantam shareeram;
Om krato smara kritam smara krato smara kritam smara.*

Anvay

Atha: let; *Vaayuh:* life force; *Amritam:* immortal; *Anilam:* prana; *Idam shareeram:* this body; *Bhasmaantam:* be reduced to ashes; *Om krato:* O intelligence! *Smara:* remember; *Kritam:* my deeds; *Smara:* remember; *Krato smara kritam smara:* O mind! Remember my deeds.

Translation

May this life force merge with the immortal prana; may this body be reduced to ashes. O intelligence! Remember my deeds. Remember, O intelligence, what has been done.

Commentary

In the process of sadhana, a stage comes where the *vayu* or air element of the sadhaka enters into the *agni* or fire element, and again into the *amrita* or eternal element. When such a stage arrives, one should remember two things: the motivating element, which is the controller of all karmas, and one's own karma. This, however, does not alter the condition of the gross body that is destined to perish. This is the description of a high level of meditation.

There are two great powers within the sadhaka. One is the ability to do karma and the other is the ability to inspire karma. The power of inspiring, or making others do karma, has been termed *kratu*. *Kratu* means Vishnu, or the power of Ishwara, the undecaying principle. The senses may perform the karma, but there is an inspiration behind them that makes them perform the karma. Without

the grace of that great power of resolve, the body cannot do any karma. This is the motivating power of Ishwara. It performs all the karma of the world through the body, taking the support of the *iccha shakti* or power of will, *kriya shakti*, the power of action and *jnana shakti*, the power of knowledge.

The senses execute their respective karmas when the *sankalpa* or resolve of the jiva awakens. In the higher states of meditation, the perception of the senses ceases and they become introverted. Some special people are able to maintain this state spontaneously, but they are few in number. Not many people can attain the state described by Kabir as: *Sadho sahaj samadhi bhali* – “O noble people! The spontaneous and effortless samadhi is best.”

The prana, indriyas, manas and buddhi of the human being are all gross. Beyond these is a subtle state called supreme consciousness. The experience of this state is difficult to describe, but the scriptures say that it is one of extreme bliss. *Yogagni*, the fire of yoga, blazes up within the sadhaka in the state of meditation. Just as fire purifies the most impure things, the indriyas, manas, buddhi and chitta are burned in this yogagni and their impurities are destroyed. The samskaras are also burned in this fire and lose their regenerative power, like baked seeds.

It is natural for the senses and the mind to become impure. They are influenced by the habits, nature and samskaras of past lives, and have never been purified. This taint has been accumulating on the jiva for ages, due to which its nature and viewpoint have completely changed. The eyes have become habituated to seeing the bad, and no longer like to see the good. The ears have become habituated to hearing negative things, and do not like to hear anything positive. The nature of the senses is to perceive the inauspicious immediately; they have a limited capacity to perceive the auspicious.

You may try to impose good habits and noble thoughts on the mind and the senses, but this will have no effect on

them. They will remain as conditioned as ever. This is why positive habits like restraint and discipline must be taught from childhood, while indiscipline and indulgence arise spontaneously. Forgiveness needs to be taught, but not anger. Purity needs to be taught, but not impurity. Worry and frustration cannot be rooted out, despite studying any number of books. The mind and personality are so conditioned by negative *samskaras* that the stain cannot be removed, no matter how much you wash.

That is why the *sadhaka* introverts his mind and senses in the state of meditation. He mixes *vayu tattwa*, the air element, with *agni tattwa*, the fire element. This fire is subtle and has no form, but when the mind and senses burn for years in this fire of meditation, their impurities are removed. All that remains thereafter is only the *amrita tattwa*, or immortal element. The entry into the *amrita tattwa* is not possible until the impurities of the mind and senses have been burnt in the fire of meditation and are completely purified. The *amrita tattwa* or the *Atma* cannot be perceived in this world as long as the *samskaras* are present. Therefore, the steps of *sadhana* have been indicated here.

First, the *vayu tattwa* should be burned in the *agni tattwa*. After purification, it should enter into the *amrita tattwa*. The awareness of the *sadhaka* passes through the different planes of consciousness: *bhuh loka*, *bhuvah loka*, *swah loka*, etc., and enters the subtle *amrita loka*, but there is no change in the state of the body. The scriptures say that this body is perishable and its reduction to ashes is inevitable. Although the *amrita tattwa* is attained by the embodied consciousness, or *jiva chetana*, it is not said to affect the gross body. Therefore the sages have not given great importance to the body.

However, the bodies of yogis and saints have been known to remain intact, without disintegration, for long periods of time after death. The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* has made a similar mention that the body, which has been purified by

the yogagni, the fire of yoga, becomes imperishable. It has also been noted that as the awareness becomes introverted during meditation, all the systems of the body, the brain, heart, blood pressure, and so on, are positively influenced. However, when the sadhaka enters the amrita tattwa, due to the purification affected by the yogagni, he is totally detached from the body. At that point, he should remember only Ishwara and his karmas. Thus he maintains awareness and the consciousness remains steady.

Mantra 18: Prayer to Agni

अग्ने नय सुपुथा राये अस्मान्विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठां ते नम उक्तिं विधेम ॥ 18॥

*Agne naya supathaa raaye asmaanvishvaani deva vayunaani
vidvaan;*

*Yuyodhyasmajjuhuraanameno bhooyishthaam te nama uktim
vidhema.*

Anvay

Agne: O Agni! *Asmaan:* to us; *Raaye:* to prosperity, wealth; *Supathaa:* through uttarayana, the auspicious path of perception; *Naya:* lead; *Deva:* O God! *Vishvaani:* all; *Vayunaani:* actions, ways; *Vidvaan:* knower; *Asmat:* our; *Juhuraanam:* crookedness, deceit; *Enah:* sin; *Yuyodhi:* remove; *Te:* to you; *Bhooyishthaam:* repeatedly; *Nama uktim:* salutations; *Vidhema:* we offer.

Translation

O Agni! Lead us to prosperity along the auspicious path. O God! You are the knower of all our actions. Please remove the sins of our crookedness and deceit. We repeatedly offer salutations to you.

Commentary

This mantra is one of the Vedic Shanti Mantras and has been mentioned in five places in the *Yajur Veda* and two places in the *Rig Veda*. In this mantra, the sadhaka prays to Agni to lead him through the auspicious path. In the previous mantras several paths were explained, among which were the *shukla marga* or bright path and *krishna marga* or dark path; the paths of *uttarayana*, the winter solstice, and *dakshinayana*, summer solstice; the paths of *laya* and *anubhooti*, and so on. The sadhaka asks Agni to take him through the path of *anubhooti*, direct experience, in which there is internal

consciousness and external unconsciousness, and not through the path of *laya* or dissolution. Swami Sivananda calls this the state of *jagrit nidra*, where the sadhaka sleeps in the world of the mind and senses, but remains constantly awake in the world of the Atma.

The word ‘agni’ is indicative of the yogagni that originates at the mooladhara chakra and manifests in the manipura chakra. This fire burns in the inverted triangle of the mooladhara chakra and advances upward, taking the sadhaka ahead. The region between mooladhara and manipura is that of darkness. The fire is not perceived in this region. The mooladhara, swadhisthana and manipura chakras are the dimensions of sleep, desire and anger, which are the qualities of darkness. When the consciousness is established in swadhisthana chakra, all the dark habits and propensities block the way upward like Sheshnaga, the mythological serpent with its thousand hoods extended, and one behaves like a fallen demon.

When the consciousness reaches manipura, the perception of light begins. Until manipura, it is difficult to determine what path you are progressing on. It is not conclusive whether the darkness you are encountering is due to the krishna marga or the lingering of the consciousness at swadhisthana chakra. Only the guru who guides your sadhana can understand this. The light of every object is different in some way or the other. The light of the moon is different from that of lightning; the light of fire is different from that of the sun. There is redness in the light of the fire at manipura. If redness is seen in the state of meditation, it should be understood that manipura is awakening. In spirituality, redness means the awakening of shakti or power at the appropriate place. That is why, after seeing the red light, saints have said, *Laali mere laal ki, jaya kanhaiya laal ki*.

In this mantra, Agni is being requested to protect the sadhaka from the obstacles on the path so that his consciousness may pass through the path of sushumna and

be established in sahasrara. There are many hurdles on the path of sadhana that have been termed *antaraaya* by Sage Patanjali and *paap* by other saints. During the initial stages of meditation, the sadhaka encounters numerous *vikshepas*, distractions, such as: laziness, sleep, yawning, itching, lightness and dizziness, apart from physical problems like irregular bowel movement, flatulence, and so on. In the process of sadhana, if the sadhaka rests without trying to remove these obstacles, his entire path will probably be without success. However, when the redness appears during meditation, indicating the awakening of the fire element at manipura, all the obstacles are automatically cleared. The sadhaka should work as hard as possible until the awakening of the redness. With this goal in view, salutations have been repeatedly offered to Agni in this mantra.

Shanti Path: Concluding Peace Invocation

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

*Om Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaat Poornamudachyate,
Poornasya Poornamaadaaya Poornamevaavashishyate.
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih.*

Anvay

Adah: That (Brahman, the creator); *Poornam*: is full, infinite;
Idam: this (universe, the created); *Poornam*: is full, infinite;
Poornaat: from that full, infinite; *Poornam*: this full, infinite;
Udachyate: emanates; *Poornasya*: of the full, infinite; *Poornam*:
(if) the full, infinite; *Aadaaya*: is taken out; *Poornam*: the full,
infinite; *Eva*: only (yet, still); *Avashishyate*: remains.

Translation

That (Brahman, the creator) is full; this (universe, the created) is full. From the full emanates the full. On taking the full out of the full, the full still remains.

Commentary

Ishwara is within you. This is a fact that must be internalized. Just as the brain of a small child develops gradually as it grows up, similarly *atmachetana*, *atmasatta*, *atmavritti* or *atmaswarupa* exist in everyone and develop slowly through spiritual effort. The *atmachetana*, or spiritual consciousness, is within everyone: human beings and animals, men and women, brahmins and shudras, saints and sinners. By determined effort, the *sadhaka* can develop his *atmachetana*. Where is this *atmachetana*? Do we project it outside like torchlight or delve deep within ourselves to see it?

Atmachetana is not spread outside like the external light. *Atmachetana* is *poorna*, full, even in the ignorant. We

are all under the influence of ignorance at this moment. Despite that, atmachetana is fully awake within us. What do we need to do then? We need to withdraw the senses and awareness from outside with the help of meditation and to focus them within. As we go within ourselves, we begin to perceive the forever illumined atmachetana. This can better be understood through a small allegory.

Suppose there is a room that holds the great light of the universe. This room is closed from all sides. It is a dark night and your guru asks you to see that great light. You say that you do not know where that light is. He says that the eternal light is burning in your innermost room. You say that you do not know the way to that room. He takes you to a room and opens the door. What happens then? The light that you see in that room is internal light mixed with light from the outside. You see the inner light in the form of rays. The external light is also partly visible. This always happens, and it needs to be understood correctly.

When you go inside the room, you ask your guru whether the existing light is internal or external. He tells you that it is partly internal and partly external. Actually, a part of the light is the light of the senses and the other part is the light of the Atma. When you ask for proof of that, he takes you to another internal room. Upon entering, you observe that although the room is further isolated inside, it has more light compared to the light in the outer room. You ask your guru where that light comes from and he tells you that the light comes from within. On enquiring whether any external light is also mixed with this light, he says no. You ask the guru whether that is the entire inner light. He replies that the actual source of inner light is in another place, but it illuminates this room.

You again ask for proof. Then you proceed to shut all the doors, windows and ventilators of that room, and draw all the curtains to prevent any outside light from coming in. Despite that, you see light in the room. Your guru asks whether you want to see the original light. You say that

you do want to see that light, because the light that can illuminate a closed room, without entering through any external opening, which can illumine internal experiences in the absence of external sensory input, must certainly be worth beholding. When the door to the inner room is opened for you, you find that the light inside is extremely intense, and it is impossible for you to enter. This is the great light of the Atma.

The guru then tells you that you need not go inside, but you must open all your doors, so that the light of the inner room illumines your outer rooms and will not have the constant need for external light. The light of the sun makes all smaller lights, like that of a candle or bulb, insignificant and unnecessary. Similarly, when all inner doors are opened, and the light of the Atma shines outwardly, there is no need of the light of the senses, even in external life. That is how the mahatmas and saints view the world, in the complete absence of the light of the senses or the mind. They live and work in the world by *atmaprakasha*, the light of the Atma. The way to achieve atmaprakasha is through meditation.

While practising meditation, when you are hounded by sleep, lethargy, nervous jolts or strange dreams, it should be understood that this is preparation for the ultimate experience. In that situation you should go inside and try to open the door. After mastering the practices of pratyahara, you should then adopt *dharana* or concentration on a form, be it of the guru, *ishta* or personal deity, or a particular chakra. That form should gradually be made the focus of your meditation. When it starts becoming clear and distinct, you will be able to advance within yourself while seeing that form. Whenever that form disappears during meditation, you need to bring it back into focus again. In this manner, you will see atmaprakasha, the light of the Atma, in the state of meditation. The light that comes from your Atma is not ordinary light; it is the light of *jnana*, true knowledge. This is the secret of that experience.

Appendices

Sanskrit Text

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

1. ॐ ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥
2. कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतुं समाः ।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥
3. असूर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसाऽऽवृताः ।
ता स्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥
4. अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत् ।
तद्भावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत्तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥
5. तदेजति तन्नैजति तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके ।
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥
6. यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥
7. यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।
तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

8. स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणमस्नाविर्ँ शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।
कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयमभूयथातथ्यतोऽर्थान्वयदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः
समाभ्यः ॥
9. अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायाँ रताः ॥
10. अन्यदेवाहुर्विद्ययाऽन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥
11. विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तद्वेदोभयँ सह ।
अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते ॥
12. अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽसंभूतिमुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ संभूत्याँ रताः ॥
13. अन्यदेवाहुः संभवादन्यदाहुरसंभवात् ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥
14. संभूतिं च विनाशं च यस्तद्वेदोभयँ सह ।
विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा संभूत्याऽमृतमश्नुते ॥
15. हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥
16. पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य व्यूहरश्मीन्समूह ।
तेजो यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि
योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥
17. वायुरनिलममृतमथेदं भस्मान्तँ शरीरम् ।
ॐ क्रतो स्मर कृतँ स्मर क्रतो स्मर कृतँ स्मर ॥
18. अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठां ते नम उक्तिं विधेम ॥

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

Translation

Shanti Mantra

That (Brahman, the creator) is full, this (universe, the created) is full. From the full emanates the full. On taking the full out of the full, the full still remains.

1. All that exists in this ever-changing universe is the abode of the Lord (in which the Lord resides). Enjoy whatever the Lord gives you. Do not covet, for whose indeed is wealth?
2. One should desire to live life with zeal for a hundred years by engaging in the discharge of one's duties. Actions performed as indicated in this verse do not cling to you, Oh man. This is the way and there is none other than this.
3. After the dissolution of their bodies, those persons who do not believe in the Atman depart to demonical planes, enveloped by blinding darkness.
4. The Self is one. It is unmoving, yet faster than the mind. Even the deities (of the senses) cannot reach it. It is the original cause and the knower of all. Although stationed in its own place, it reaches out to those that run. It is the all-pervading air and supports the activities of the world, like water and rain (the karmas and actions).

5. That (Atman) moves and also does not move. That (Atman) is the farthest and also the nearest. That (Atman) is present within this whole world and is also outside.
6. He, who sees all beings in his own Atman, and recognizes his own Atman in all beings, by virtue of that, he feels no revulsion for any being.
7. To the person, who is the knower, all beings are one with his own Self. In that person, who constantly perceives the unity, what delusion and what sorrow remain?
8. He (the Atman) is all-pervading, radiant, flawless, without any body, subtle or gross, pure and untouched by evil. He is the seer, omniscient, all-encompassing and self-born. Since eternity He has duly distributed to all things their respective functions, according to their nature and karma.
9. Those who worship *avidya* (ignorance) enter into darkness and those who worship *vidya* (knowledge) enter into still greater darkness.
10. The result of vidya, they say, is distinct and so is the result of avidya. Thus we have heard from the wise, who have expounded this subject to us.
11. He, who knows both vidya and avidya together, crosses death through avidya and attains eternal life through vidya.
12. Those who worship the unmanifest (in the state of dhyana) enter into blinding darkness. However, those who take delight in the manifest enter into still greater darkness.
13. From (worship) of the manifest, one type of result is told, and from the unmanifest another type of result is told.

Thus have we heard from the wise, who have expounded that (knowledge) to us.

14. He who knows both the unmanifest nature and the manifest nature together, overcomes death through the manifest nature and obtains eternal life through the unmanifest.
15. A golden disc covers the face of Truth. Oh Sun, remove that lid for the sight of this seeker of Truth.
16. Oh Nourisher! Oh sole Seer! Oh Ordainer of Truth! Oh illuminating Sun! Oh son of Prajapati! Diffuse your rays and gather up your light, that I may behold your most auspicious form. Who is this Purusha, this (pure consciousness within)? I am He.
17. May this life-force merge with the immortal prana; may this body be reduced to ashes. Oh Intelligence! Remember my deeds. Remember, Oh Intelligence, what has been done.
18. Oh Agni! Lead us to prosperity along the auspicious path. Oh God! You are the knower of all our actions. Please remove the sins of our crookedness and deceit. We repeatedly offer salutations to you.

Shanti Mantra

That (Brahman, the creator) is full, this (universe, the created) is full. From the full emanates the full. On taking the full out of the full, the full still remains.

Notes

Notes

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Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



The *Ishavasya Upanishad* is a small text of eighteen verses that comprises the last chapter of the *Yajur Veda*. Considered to be the seed of the entire Indian philosophy, it is one of the most profound literary works to date.

Swami Niranjanananda's commentary on this Upanishad makes the depth of its wisdom accessible to all. The clarity of thought and language allows the highest thinking and understanding of the sages and seers of the vedic times to become comprehensible. The commentary is not only a guide; it also indicates how the teachings of the Upanishad are relevant to the spiritual aspirant of the twenty-first century. Life, action, knowledge and the process of meditation are explained in a light that inspire the reader to connect and explore. Swami Niranjanananda's lucid approach is a boon to all who wish to have direction and purpose in their life and spiritual practice.



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